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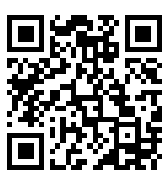

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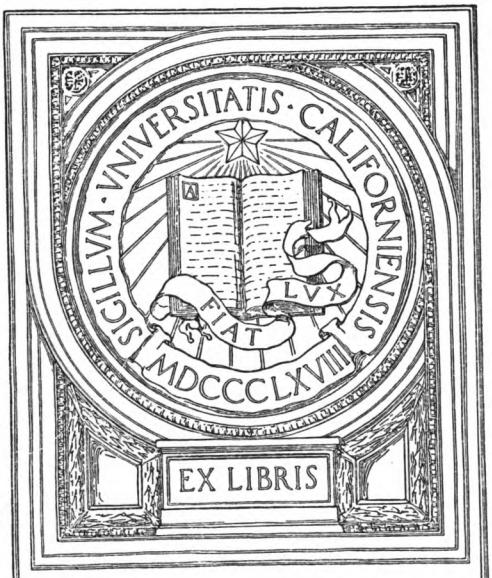

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BRAWNY-MAN

James Stevens

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BOOK I

DAYS OF ADVENTURE

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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I

"THAT boy shorely is big and strong for his age."

"Well, he is, that's true. But it won't likely do him any good. I 'low he's got too much natural-born meanness ever to amount to anything."

People were saying that about me when I was a seven-year-old boy in Iowa; and people were saying it about me out in Idaho when I was thirteen. I hadn't minded it much in the first place, and by the time I was thirteen it sounded as natural as a "hello" along the road. If people had stopped saying it, I'd have missed it.

When I was thirteen the uncle who had raised me sent me to a private school to get an education. It wasn't long until I was hearing the old talk there. But the teachers put a little more on it; they said they were going to make me do better. They certainly tried hard enough, and they made me a lot of bother. But I managed to keep most of my old ways, and for quite a while I had a good time.

A thousand acres of land belonged to the school, about half of them cultivated, the rest in sagebrush. Alfalfa was the main crop; it was grown for the eighty head of dairy cows. There were poultry pens, blacksmith and carpenter shops, a laundry, a bakery, and a dressmaking place. In the fields, barns and shops the boys could earn their board and schooling by working thirty hours a week. The girls were given the same chance at women's work. No one could pay all the way; everybody had to work out at least half of it. The school was two miles from a Snake River town. It was a very fine thing for the boys and girls who lived away out from the high schools.

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A boy was supposed to be fifteen before he could get into the school, but because of my size and my poor circumstances I was let in before my fourteenth birthday. I had been doing a man's work on a ranch for a long time. My muscles were used to clearing, seeding and harvesting. I had helped gather cattle. I had ridden tough colts fresh from the range. My uncle said I was fit to go to the school and work my way to an education. It was that or herd sheep, he said; I had to do for myself somehow. I wasn't crazy about being educated, but I'd have died before I'd have herded sheep. That was the lowest life in our country. So I went to the school.

Milking ten cows night and morning was my job. At half past three each morning the dairy professor walked softly down the dormitory hall and knocked on the doors behind which his boy milkers slept. I had always been used to getting up early, but I had never got over a morning hankering to snooze awhile after waking up, hugging myself in the blankets, which never did seem so soft and warm any other time, shoving my head down in the pillow to make the darkness blacker, and thinking gentle, drowsy thoughts. But I never dozed off. I had been trained out of that long ago. Something like an alarm clock would seem to ring in my head and out from the blankets I would come in one jump, though I wouldn't really be awake yet. It was always a surprise to me when I found my bare feet on the floor and felt shivers up and down my backbone; it seemed like I shouldn't be out there at all, but back in my warm bed. When I was fully awake I always felt cranky, and I fairly hated the boys who could go on sleeping while I was pulling on my milk-spotted overalls and cold shoes and stumbling down the dark stairs and over the graveled trail to the barn.

The first job of the morning was to heave hay down from the mows and spread it through the mangers. I

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would get warmed up at this work and feel better. Next we would give each stanchioned Jersey a feed of chops and bran. I would usually be feeling good enough by this time to plague my cows by making them stretch their necks and bawl for the feed before I would give it to them. That was always amusing except when the dairy professor would catch me at it. Then we had to curry and brush the cows and wash and dry their udders. Most of us boy milkers had been used to corral milking, and this looked like foolishness to us. We thought the dairy professor was an awful crank about cow-scrubbing and milk buckets and almost everything else. The buckets were patent affairs with covers that had only a little hole to milk in. We had to weigh the milk from each cow and mark the weight down on a card. What was worse, the dairy professor never allowed a cow to be hit or cussed. If you cussed a cow you was reported to the principal; if you hit one you was sent to another job. We put up with his notions, for milking was the best job in the school. The barn was warm in winter; and there was a kind of pleasure in the morning work when you were resting a cheek against a soft, warm flank, the two milk streams hissing and purring in the white foam, and you half-drowsing there in the dim lantern light.

We were always done before six. Then we would pray and eat breakfast. School started at half past seven and stopped at noon. In the afternoons most of the other boys worked from one to five. The ones who were working all their way had to work ten hours on Saturday; the ones who were paying a half or a third were free then. The milkers were supposed to snooze an hour or more every afternoon. At half past three it was work again for us. At eight o'clock we had to go to bed, an hour before the others.

Nine months passed along this way. I thought I was doing pretty good. My Sunday work made five hours a

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week extra for me, so I had seventy-five cents for spending money every Saturday night. I stayed at the school during the Christmas holidays; and I had a pile of money then, as I had worked ten hours a day in the milkhouse for fourteen days straight, at fifteen cents an hour. The dairy professor declared I had it in me to become a first-rate butter-maker; and he said if I would promise to quit my meanness and try to do better, he would teach me all about the milk room and the creamery. Well, I was still scared of sheep-herding, so for once in my life I made a special try at being good. And the dairy professor appreciated it.

When the school term was over he put me to work in the milk room at man's pay. The work was easy enough for me to handle, but I found it much harder to do better now. There were a lot of farm hands hired by the school in the summer to take the places of the boys who had gone home, and some of these farm hands were regular hobos. They were as bad as cow hands for telling stories about saloons and bad women. There wasn't any chapel or morning prayer any more, nor anything else to hold me back from enjoying the stories the farm hands told in the evening hours.

My work was to cool the milk when it was brought from the barn each morning, and then bottle it. Then I would separate the milk that was left. After breakfast I would wash the buckets, cans, tables and shelves, and feed the calves skimmed milk. When the driver got back I had to wash the empty bottles. I had some time off in the afternoons, but an hour's work after supper.

I was with the farm hands for only an hour or so each evening, and their stories might not have influenced me so much if something hadn't happened to start me bragging myself. The dairy professor got the idea that I should learn the milk route so that I could take the

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driver's place whenever it was necessary. I was to go with him two days a week until I knew the customers' houses. This way I was hauled to the Island, where Big Mag had her house. The driver warned me "not to go blattin' around the school I'm deliverin' here. It's a good bill and we don't want to lose it." But when some of Big Mag's fat women came out of the kitchen and joked at the driver and winked at me I decided he was thinking of more than the six quarts of milk a day which Big Mag took from him.

"I'm not such a backwoods sucker as you seem to think," I told him after our second trip.

Then I went on to ask him questions about Big Mag's women, showing him that I wasn't mad, but simply curious. He liked to brag, and finally I had him going at a great rate, telling me what a wonderful ladies' man he was. His experiences interested me a lot, but I didn't hear near all of them; for after we had made two trips together the head of the school, a Presbyterian preacher, came back from the East; and what the brethren in the town told him about the wicked milk delivery the school was making nearly cost the driver and the dairy professor their jobs. And I wasn't allowed to go out any more.

Well, I hadn't really been harmed any, but I had learned quite a bit. And now I got to telling bragging stories among the farm hands myself, when the driver wasn't around. I started sliding back slow at first, but before long I simply whizzed! I started cussing like a cow hand again; I went to carrying a plug and I took a chew whenever I felt like it; and, worst of all, I began to loaf on my job. The dairy professor argued and argued with me, but I was stubborn now and it didn't do him any good. By the time school started all I was getting from him was sour looks.

One winter morning I got a kick from a prize heifer—I

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was then milking again—and I gave her a cussing up one side and down the other and I tried to cave her ribs in with my milk stool. I was fired out of the dairy barn and I was put among the lowest boys, who were shoveling sand and gravel for use in the building of a new cement dormitory. Then, of course, I lost what little ambition I had to learn the butter-making business and I slid back faster than ever. I was as big now as most of the oldest boys, though some of them were past twenty. I took to sneaking out of nights with the meanest ones, going into town and not coming back until late. Once I was caught in a pool hall. I was prayed over and warned to do better, or something would happen. I did stop sneaking out so much, but it was no use; the secretary of the school's Christian Endeavorers caught me firing tobacco juice at a knot hole and he told on me.

Well, the school people agreed then with what had always been said about me; I had been given every chance to do better, but I simply had too much natural-born meanness ever to amount to anything; so I was fired out and ordered to go back to my uncle. But I knew that meant herding sheep. And anyone who thought I would put up with herding sheep had another guess coming. I felt like I was big enough now to hold down a man's job anywhere, so I made up my mind to get out of this part of the country and look for one.

On an afternoon of February, 1908, I crawled into an empty box car of a freight that was headed east. I had three dollars and eighty cents in my pocket and I was full of baked salmon and peach cobbler, which I had eaten for dinner. I felt very cocky and I decided I would ride this freight as far as Colorado and get out of Idaho altogether. But the freight stopped at a town eight miles up the river and I was thrown off the train by a cranky brakeman.

"Plague take you!" he roared. "Why don't you git

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home and *stay* home? You kids ramblin' around is what makes life miser'ble for us railroad fellers. Don't lemme lay my hands on you agin!"

Feeling very much taken down, I sneaked up the yards and loafed around the depot and the town the rest of the day. I got lonesomer every minute. And it was worse after dark. Another freight was due around nine o'clock and I had planned to catch it. After dark I sat in the warm depot until eight o'clock, then I went uptown to get some ham and eggs and coffee before I caught the train.

No one looked at me as I tramped along; I didn't see a familiar face in the warm pool rooms and saloons when I peered through the bright windows; and I thought lonesomely now that there was no place in town where I could go and see one. I went into a dark, dirty restaurant and ordered my supper. Pretty soon a fat, slouchy waitress slammed a platter of ham and eggs down in front of me, set a cup of coffee down so hard that it sloppd over, and then went back to the kitchen without a word. I ate lonesomely and went out into the dark again the same way. Out in the yards I stopped in the shelter of the water tank. I stood and shivered in the hard wind; I listened to it howl and screech in the wires above; and it sounded so infernally dismal, and the night looked so blamed black, and I felt so concerned lonesome and cold that I would have sat down and bawled if it hadn't seemed like the wrong thing for a workingman to do. By and by I got to arguing with myself that there wasn't any sense in hoboing off to Colorado at this cold time of the year, and there wasn't any sense in trying to be a workingman too suddenly either. I'd better go slow and careful, I argued; take it easy, and I'd be more likely to get somewhere. I had hoboed eight miles already; that wasn't so bad for one day; it would be better for me to get a good night's sleep and then make

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a fresh start in the morning. I had always been a good arguer, and I soon convinced myself. I went back uptown and rented a room for the night.

The next morning I went to a cleaner restaurant and had a fine breakfast of mush, pork chops and hot cakes. Then I went into a pool room, sat down by the hot stove, took a chew, and tried to figure on what I should do. I was so comfortable, the figuring came mighty hard. I sat and chewed and figured, but I was still up a stump. Colorado appealed to me less than ever this cold morning. And so did sheep. I had just about decided that I was up against it when the pool-room man came up and made the sun shine again.

He said a nurseryman who lived four miles from town had left word to send him a boy who could cut wood. "Wages, fifteen a month. You look husky. Want to tackle 'er?" Well, it wasn't a workingman's job, but I said I'd be glad to tackle it and I certainly was.

I worked over a month for this nurseryman. I cut wood like a man; he said so himself. But he only paid me the fifteen dollars a month I had agreed to. The big stack of poles was in stove wood by the first of April. The nurseryman gave me a letter to a sheep rancher up the river. I took it with thanks, but I didn't intend to use it. No, sir! Twenty dollars jingled in my pocket; the spring was simply busting itself to make bright sunshine and sweet smells and green grass; and as I tramped over the wet road to town I was lifted up by grander feelings than I had ever known in all my born days! I was certainly glad that I had gone slow and careful. I was all ripe and ready to be a real workingman now. Sheep-herding! I wondered what in the world that nurseryman thought I was, anyway!

Once again I rode for a man's job on a rattling freight. At Nampa, a division point, I was pulled off the train by a marshal who looked as big as two men. He shook me

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up and then slung me around so that my head got a fearful bump on the side of the car. I jerked free and ran like a rabbit, dodging between piles of ties and around sheds. At every turn I was sure I could hear the marshal's feet pounding behind me. Finally I reared around the corner and piled into a gang of men who were sitting on the sunny side of a street that bordered the yards.

"Hey!" yelled one of them. "What in the world are you runnin' from? What's the big rush?"

He looked friendly, so I sat down and told him about the marshal. The men all laughed.

"Kid, when you ride into the Nampa yard you're ridin' into dynamite," said the friendly man. "You're lucky Nampa Larry didn't take his sap to you. He tailbones most every stiff he ketches, hey, Hardpan?"

I swelled up some now over my experience with the terrible Nampa Larry; but when Hardpan Kelly, who seemed to be the leader of the gang, told a story about what *he'd* done to Larry when that railroad bull tried to sap *him*, my experience seemed small and pitiful. Another man then bragged of the neat licking he had given a hostile bull in Casey, a place I had not heard of before now, though it seemed to be a big city. Then a dark-complected, chubby man told about a battle royal in the great city of Shy; he didn't brag, but wound up his story like this: "Mind you now, I ain't sayin' who won; all I got to say is, I didn't get licked." He was real modest.

Well, I was curious about Casey and Shy, but I wasn't going to ask about them and show my ignorance. I wished now that I hadn't read so many Frank Merriwell stories behind my geography when I ought to have been studying. But I was soon puzzled some more, for the men got to talking of the big city of Loss, in the great state of Cal; and they argued for a long time as to whether it was a better winter city than Nawlins; then

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they dropped the argument to listen to Hardpan Kelly tell of a fine job that he had quit in the big city of Sin See back East, just to go hoboing again on the team hand jobs of the West.

I soon found out that the reason these men knew so much geography was because they were hobo workingmen who traveled from one big grading job to another in the summer and spent their wages in these strange cities in the winter. They talked even tougher than cow hands, and they made the cities look so wicked that Big Mag's place seemed like a Sunday school when I thought of it. I knew I ought to be ashamed, but it gave me a lot of pleasure to hear these men talk. They certainly lived wonderfully exciting lives, though driving mules was the only work they talked about. I knew I could handle stock, and I decided to stick with these men, if I could, and hobo with them to some place where I could get a man's job. They might be tough and wicked, but they all looked healthy and clean, and it would be better to go with them than to herd sheep. And, there is no use denying it, those strange cities appeared wonderful, even if they were wicked; and I got a little excited as I thought that maybe sometime I could sit around and tell stories and argue about the cities of Nawlins and Loss, Sin See, Casey and Shy.

The talk went on for an hour or more. Then Hardpan Kelly said he had the price of a snort, and the others said a snort was what they needed more than anything else in the world just then. The men got up and walked towards the main street, following Hardpan Kelly. I tagged along behind. I heard the two in front of me whispering that "Hardpan is sure alive; says he's only got a road stake, but he's lousy with it." I wondered why the man insisted so that Hardpan was alive, for anyone could see that he looked and acted as though he'd never seen a sick day; and I bothered my head trying to figure

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what a road stake might be, whether it was some kind of surveyor's stake, or maybe a steak that he carried along to eat on the road; and how could he be lousy with any kind of steak or stake, anyway?

The gang went into a saloon. I was scared to follow and I waited outside for a long time. At last I got hungry and went to a lunch room to eat. Then I loafed around for a couple of hours, without meeting the gang. When I saw the hobos again they were around a three-wagon freighting outfit; and some of them were climbing on the loads. I moseyed over. The friendly man sang out: "Here's the gaycat again! Better come take on some labor, fuzz-face; old Larry'll sap you silly if he spots you on the stem!"

He and four others were on a wagon loaded with grain. I wanted to go with them worse than anything, but I was scared of the freighter.

"Shake a leg!" he yelled at me.

And you should have seen me pile on! The freighter cracked a long lash over the eight-mule team and the wagons began to move. The five hobos paid no more attention to me. They got into an argument as to whether the team camp they were going to was a "main" camp or a "gypo" camp; and the longer they argued, the louder they yelled. I enjoyed hearing their talk, though I could not understand much of it. They spoke of rag houses, Jacks and Neds, walkers, stomach robbers, tin pans, leather, scissor bills, muck sticks, barn dogs, and jug heads. These words meant nothing to me then. But I understood finally that we were going to a tent camp on a government ditch bossed by Bum Dowd, and that we were to look for jobs driving mules. I began to doubt if I would be a regular team hand for a long time; it seemed like it would take many months to learn this new language.

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II

At the camp I was at once picked out by the team hands and called a gaycat and a fuzz-face. This smarted a little when I found that the words meant I was an ignorant boy. I didn't feel quite so big. And then Bum Dowd just laughed when I asked for a team of mules, and put me to dish-washing in the camp kitchen. I took it, thinking that if I did the job good I'd get to team later on. But it was no use. I sweat away in that kitchen from five in the morning until seven at night for a month, and still Bum Dowd laughed when I asked for a team. I had heard considerable talk among the team hands of a new reclamation job at Shoshone; a big ditch was being graded to bring water to two hundred thousand acres of land on the north side of Snake River canyon. I had learned the hobos' ways and their talk pretty well by now; I made up my mind to go to this big job, tell some camp boss I was an old-time team hand, and be done with this boy's work for good.

I crawled from a freight in the town of Shoshone at half past five on a May morning. I ate breakfast at a small restaurant and asked the way to the camps. I was told it was thirty miles to Grant & Company's headquarters. "Keep the left-hand road," the restaurant man said. "There's a pump station sixteen miles out. Better let me fix you some sandwiches."

I told him to go ahead.

"Oughter wait and go on a wagon," he said, as he wrapped up the lunch. "She's a long, hot, dusty hike. Oughter ride."

But I was sure that if I struck one of the camps alone

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I'd have a better chance of getting a man's job. So I started out through the sagebrush. A red haze was swimming all over it from the rising sun.

It is volcanic ash soil in that country and the dust drifts along like snow in the winds. The road through the brush was so thick with dust that there were scarcely no signs of wagon tracks at all. Tramping along, thinking about the job ahead and dreaming about the wonderful cities I might see sometime, I followed a road that branched to the left about four miles from town. A thirty-mile hike didn't appear so big to me, as I was used to loping over the hills back home. But after I had been going for several hours I got thirsty and began to look for the water tower. I could see for miles over the road, but nothing showed above the flat, gray stretch of sagebrush except a hazy ridge of mountains far away.

I began to worry a little as I hiked on and on and the sun got so high in the sky that I could tell it was near noon. I hit up a faster lick and kept straining my eyes in looks for the water tower. But it never showed in the gray ahead. Still I plugged on. I nibbled at one of the sandwiches, but it was so dry and bitter on my tongue that I threw both away. My throat burned from alkali dust. I was so thirsty that I'd have drunk green scum out of a cow track. I plugged on for another hour, looking always for the water tower. But still there was nothing but the sagebrush and the hazy mountain ridge ahead. I finally gave the water tower up. I had certainly come more than sixteen miles. I could tell by my shadow it was long past noon. I had taken the wrong road, and that was all there was to it. I was really on the old Shoshone-Milner stage road. It had not been used since the Twin Falls railroad went in, and was about forgotten now. I didn't know what road it was then, but I was certain it led to some place near Snake River. I was so mad I could have bawled. But I didn't. I just

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swore I'd follow this road through or die. I wouldn't go back to Shoshone. And I tramped on.

I wasn't thinking and dreaming now; I just looked and looked at every step for something to show ahead besides the sleepy, mournful swaying of the dusty gray sagebrush leaves. But the mountains only seemed to get hazier and farther away, and it made me peevishly mad to see them fade out this way, for I knew there were cold springs on their slopes and the cool shade of green trees. Very often I'd see the skeletons of cattle and sheep all dry and white by the roadside; and they got to working on my imagination, making me think of coyotes and buzzards and what might happen to me if I was crippled or taken sick—I got to imagining terrors like I had a fever. And they made me panicky. Once I saw a kerosene can in the brush. I ran to it; but it was rotten with rust, had lain there for years. I certainly repented now of my dreams of wicked wanderings; and I got to thinking that it might be a divine hand had led me into this road just to give me a taste of torment before I was sent on to hell. How I wished now that I had listened to the Presbyterians and Methodists when they had warned me and urged me! I prayed and promised to do better if I could get one more chance. But it didn't do any good. The infernal notions and pictures kept coming worse and worse. I guess there is no worse devil than imagination.

Yet all the time I was tramping and tramping on; I kept stumbling away somehow, and I was still going at sunset, though I seemed to have just enough sense left to keep to the road. I hardly knew it when the dark began to come down. Some sort of instinct kept me digging along the road. Suddenly, directly to my right, I saw something shining through the sagebrush. It was water! I had come to an irrigation ditch! I dropped down on my belly and drank in great gulps until I was just

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glutted. Then I soused my face and my hair. Then I sat up and sighed, feeling like I had woke up from an awful nightmare. I saw a field beyond the ditch, and a ranch house. Tired—oh, lordy, but I was *so* tired!—I plodded over there for supper and bed. The hike had been quite a chore. I was only fifteen. Without water, I had walked thirteen hours and forty-one miles.

The nearest camp was only five miles from the ranch house. The next morning I hiked to this camp. Burly Hughes was the walking boss. I asked him for a team.

"Ain't got no teams fer fuzz-faces!" he roared. "You'll make a fair flunky, maybe. Git into the kitchen!"

So it appeared like I was a boy still, though I had traveled so far, and with so much thought, grief and effort, for a man's job! But I didn't complain. I was simply more determined than ever to get to be a real workingman sometime, somewhere, somehow.

In this cookhouse, like the one at Nampa, the hours were tiresome and long. The cook got up at four, the other two flunkies and myself got up at five, and we had breakfast on the table by six. When dish-washing and potato-peeling were done we had an hour before we fixed dinner. In the afternoon we had time off from two to four. At eight o'clock the day's work was done. It was a pretty weary old life in that desert land. Hot winds blew all day long, and out on the works the team hands plodded behind their mules in clouds of dust. It was a gray stretch of sagebrush everywhere you looked; no trees anywhere in sight; just ridges of lava rock here and there. But I was used to the sagebrush country, though it was hillier and not so monotonous-looking back home, and I got along fairly well. I didn't like my job; but I did enjoy my hour or two in the bunkhouse every night.

I heard many more wonderful stories there from the team hands. They all had amazing nicknames and were

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never called by any others, and they never told anything but amazing stories. There was Rough Rider Smiler; he had been with Teddy Roosevelt in Cuba and claimed to know him well. There was Google Eye Murphy, who was always telling about the tough fights he had been in at Hinky Dink's in Shy. There was Frisco Timmy, who had a string of yarns about the Chinks in his home town. But the mightiest one of all was Burly Hughes, who declared he had killed three niggers when he was a camp boss in the South and had notches for them in the handle of his gun. I was scared of Burly Hughes and whenever he ordered me to wash his clothes I never said a word, but just did it. And I didn't dare to quit while he was in camp, because he had beaten up several men who had asked for their time when he was in a bad humor. I stayed on until the first of August. Then Burly Hughes quit himself; Kid Hogan took his job; he was a kinder boss, and in ten days I asked for my time check. I had a good stake now. I planned to hobo to Portland and then start out seeing some of the wonderful cities the team hands talked about.

But Burly Hughes was the first man I met when I reached Shoshone. His eyes were bloodshot and the lids were swelled over them; his thick hands were shaky. He had been soaked in raw alcohol for over a week. He was broke, but I didn't know it. He shook hands with me like an old friend and I was tremendously flattered. I must come and meet the gang, he said; fine bunch of stiffs in town now.

And the gang was the friendliest bunch of team hands I had ever hoped to see. They brought me a can of beer and kept me right in their talk all the time. And in a little while I was feeling like they had made me one of them at last. I was very grateful to Burly Hughes and forgot all about his meanness in camp. Pretty soon he whispered that it was a custom of the team hand tribe

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for a live one to pass out a dollar to each team hand he met in town; I didn't like this part of it very much, but I took the hint, broke some bills and passed silver around. Everybody bragged on me so much that I got stirred up and felt that I might as well go it, so I said I would buy some bottled beer and a jungle feed; and then the team hands all slapped me on the back and yelled that I would be a team hand right some day, they just knew it! And I was about as glad and proud as I had ever been in my life.

Two days later I had just thirty-five cents in my pocket; I was still in Shoshone; the team hands were not even looking at me any more, and I was a lonesome boy again.

It was the same old thing again when I went back to the camps. Water boy in one, flunky again in two others, barn helper in still another. I didn't get a man's job until I went to the Wood River project, thirty miles above Shoshone, in the last week of October.

It had been a mighty tough summer and I was getting fairly sick of doing a boy's work for boy's pay. I was getting bigger all the time and it looked like the boss men ought to begin to respect me a little before long. But they wouldn't do it, and neither would the plainest team hands. When I asked for work at Hales & Crane's camp, here it was again; I was put to work greasing the dump wagons in which the dirt was hauled from the elevating grader. But I didn't chew the rag about it; I just buckled down to the wagon-greasing and declared I would make a team hand's job yet. I was pretty well contented there, after all, for it was a regular camp.

Old Foster Crane had been a hobo team hand for years himself and he would hire no one but a real member of the tribe to handle his mules. About every man in the camp looked like a hero to me. Red Grabby, the walking boss, had run camps in two dozen States; no walker

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anywhere was better known or liked. Slim Golden, the plow-shaker, Blue Snyder, the machine-skinner, Lord Baltimore, the cook, Rowdy Rapp, the blacksmith, Slats Davidson, the timekeeper, Nitre Kennedy, the barn boss —there wasn't a one in this gang who could be beat at his job.

Besides, this was a gamblers' camp. There was a big poker tent with five tables, and there the games ran all Saturday night and through Sunday until ten o'clock. The contractors furnished lights, cards and chips and would give any man a poker order that could be cashed at the town office. Spot Evans, Poker Tom Travis, Black Hawk, Liver Lip Red, Underwear Blackie, and Slue Foot Niergaard, the best-known of the team hand gamblers, were all in this camp. Paddy the Devil generally held his own in the poker games, too; but he was such a famous fighter that no one hardly ever thought to talk about his card-playing; it was good, but his fighting simply couldn't be beat. This bunch and other star players usually filled two tables; the poorer gamblers played for smaller jackpots at the other three.

Though I was still at a boy's job, I had about the best time of my life in this camp. Five nights a week I heard the most amazing and wonderful stories I ever had heard. When the poker games were running, I would stand and watch, almost as excited as the players by the bright colors of the cards, the rattle of chips and the brave, careless way these men would plunge two weeks' wages on one bet, lose it, and never bat an eye. I would feel that I could stand even another year of boy's work, if I had to, as long as I could hope to sit in a circle sometime and tell my share of grand yarns, and plunge at the poker table, and wear a moniker.

Well, I was coming to it. I was growing; I couldn't help it, the way I ate. And the team hands took kind notice of me now pretty often. I had given dollars to some

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of them on my first blow-in, and they hadn't forgotten it. I knew the language now and could speak of a few camps. Once I heard Spot Evans say to Paddy the Devil: "That fuzz-face'll be a real team hand in a couple more years." "I'm afraid he will," said Paddy. I swelled up with pride; but two years seemed a long time to wait.

And I didn't wait so long. At Thanksgiving time there was a storm, and the work was shut down for a week. The poker games ran day and night. On Saturday I washed clothes for some of the gamblers and made seven dollars. I was paid in poker chips. I was about to cash them in, when Overland Slim, one of the poorer players who had gone broke, asked me to stake him. He couldn't play poker for sour apples; I'd heard Paddy the Devil tell him so; but I couldn't hardly turn him down unless I played the chips myself. So that was what I did.

I won from the start. I was lucky and I had learned a lot from watching so many games. At midnight I was a winner by fifty dollars. I got sleepy then, so I cashed in and went to bed. I went back to the tent the next morning. There was a vacant seat at one of the big tables and I felt a wild notion to try my luck there.

"No," said Paddy the Devil. "Hang on to what you got, gazoony. Pork chops'll hang high this winter."

"Let him come," growled Black Hawk. "When'd we start playin' pets around this game? Here's where friendship ceases."

Paddy the Devil shrugged up his great shoulders. I sat down kind of timidly right across the table from Black Hawk. I played carefully and luck still trailed me along. Two hours after dinner I had an eighty-dollar stack of chips.

My uncle used to tell me that if I would practice it I could learn to always have a presentiment before any-

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thing tremendous happened to me. He said it was a common gift in our family. And it was true that he never once lost a calf or a hog or got licked when he was drunk without him saying afterwards: "It couldn't be helped. I knew it would happen, for I had one of my presentiments." Good luck hardly ever happened to him, so he never had presentiments about it. "But *you* learn to have 'em," he would say. "You might be luckier'n me; and if you was, presentiments would help you a lot." I had tried, but I was too forgetful, I guess, for I would very seldom ever have one.

But right now a feeling stirred up suddenly in me which I knew was a powerful presentiment, and nothing else. It was so strong and unusual that for a few seconds I forgot the white canvas overhead, the team hands "playin' rubbers" over the shoulders of the men ganged around the five tables, the heater glowing red in the center of the circle of tables and men, the black, lean face and beady eyes of Black Hawk in front of me, the solemn poker faces of the men around, the brown blanket on the table, the blue, red and white stacks of chips in front of each man, the thin, freckled fingers of Spot Evans dealing out the bright, blue-backed cards—I just forgot this and saw my uncle shaking his finger under my nose and heard him say: "You learn to have presentiments, bub. They'll most likely do you a heap of good."

I could feel the presentiment now, clean through my bones. Something tremendous was going to happen, and it would be something good! I just knew it! And it did and it was! That was the beauty part of this presentiment.

Trying to appear like I wasn't expecting anything unusual, I picked up my five cards, sandwiched them between my hands, and squeezed the corners down one at a time. The first card was the ten of hearts, the other four were—aces! Talk about presentiments! I had

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never had such a good one before, and I never did have one again that worked out in such fine style. The worst of this one was that I wanted to yell over it and couldn't. I felt my face flushing up and I tried hard to keep cool. It was the first time four aces had shown up in all the Thanksgiving play. It was hard not to appear excited; my thoughts simply danced and sung! "Four aces! I guess now they'll say that boy's a gamblin' devil, all right. Four aces! Golly, I sure got to play 'em right! I bet anyway the tribe won't forget this jackpot for a while. Four aces for this poor old fuzz-face of a kid, Jimmie Turner! Oh, golly, but I'll make 'em look!"

The play was on. Black Hawk opened the jackpot; Paddy the Devil and Poker Tom stayed. I fought down a crazy notion to raise them to the roof; and I kept sense enough to only call and then draw one card. The other three players threw down. After the draw Black Hawk passed the bet, and so did Paddy and Tom. I looked my hand over and over and stared wisely at the others, trying to act like a green player is supposed to when he makes a bluff. Then I suddenly pushed out a ten-dollar bet. Black Hawk raised me twenty right off the minute. Paddy the Devil and Poker Tom threw down, and I had a bad moment of panic then; it seemed like every one of the forty-odd men in the tent was staring at me, and sneering and laughing because I was trying to buck such a gambler as Black Hawk. Then that presentiment stirred in me again, and I said to myself: "What's the matter with you, anyway? You've got a hand which only a straight flush can beat; you're practically boss of the table; so, play cards." Then I settled down and tried to figure the proper play.

Was it likely now, I wondered, that I had made Black Hawk think I was bluffing? Or did he figure that I had drawn to two pair and made a full house, and then make his big raise to scare me out? Or did he think that he

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held a cinch hand and was really wanting a call or a raise? Then the awful thought struck me that he might have a straight flush, that Spot Evans, who had the reputation of being too slick a dealer, had cold-decked me for a share of the clean-up. Maybe I'd better do no more than call him, I argued. Then I felt ashamed. What was I thinking of! To just *call* on four aces! Why, even poor players like Overland Slim would sneer and laugh about that! No; there was only one thing to do, and that was to plunge out into a grand play.

"I tap myself," I said.

Black Hawk must have studied his cards for five minutes without making a move. All the team hands in the tent gathered around our table. I felt them jamming behind me. Clouds of tobacco smoke floated down in front of my eyes, and Black Hawk looked more dangerous and mean than ever through the smoke. I held both my hands hard on the table to keep them from trembling and looked as steadily as I could at the cards which peeked from under them. I felt a smother from the crowd. I began to sweat. It seemed like I could never stand the strain. But the worst hadn't come yet.

Now Black Hawk's hands moved idly around his stacks for a good two minutes. Then he slowly counted my stacks, matched them from his own chips—and hauled back. Then he took up the tormenting study of his cards again. Every so often he would throw me a sudden, fierce, black stare; and when he did my ears seemed to grow large and hot and to crawl up into my hair. My nerves got to leaping and jumping and I had to stiffen my muscles more every minute to keep quiet. That Black Hawk was a regular devil; he couldn't do worse if he was to start pitchforking me all over the tent. Was he *never* in the world going to do a thing but push in his chips, haul them back again, stare at his cards, and scorch me with fierce, black looks? Well, if he

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wasn't, I'd have to give in pretty soon, ease off the strain, and let him see——

Black Hawk was moving out his chips again.

"I call," he said.

If that wasn't relief, then I've never felt it and don't know what it means. But I still had to fight to keep from trembling as I spread out my cards. For a second Black Hawk's face turned dark red, then he made a short motion for me to take the pot. The tent seemed filled with a tremendous roar; the thick clouds of smoke faded out in the dazzlingest shine, and it brightened up wonderfully the whiskered faces and rough clothes of the team hands around. As I raked in the chips a heavy hand thumped me on the shoulder.

"Where you from, you ace-eatin' gamboleer?"

I looked up to see the big red mustache of Red Grabby. The camp boss had been standing behind me these last minutes. I didn't want to tell him I was an Idaho kid, a "home guard," and I didn't want to lie to a walking boss, either, so I just told him the name of the Iowa county where I was born.

"Appanoose county, hey? Well, you got a heister, a full-size' moniker, comin' to you! You got real nerve! That was cold-blooded gamblin', what I mean! Lis'en, you savages!" he roared. "From now on we're callin' this gazoony Appanoose Jim, see! He's goin' to be a team hand right!"

Well, his words certainly sounded like gold to me. I had never felt better in all my born days. I wasn't a boy any more. I was a man.

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III

THE smoker of the branch-line train was packed with team hands and hard-rock men from the Wood River project and miners from the Haley country. All the windows were shut tight to keep out the frosty air of the December night. The lights in the car roof made a dull shine through the blue drifts of tobacco smoke. The heater was crammed with coal and its sides were so hot that gold sparks snapped from the fire-red iron. Still, I could feel the cold where I sat in the back of the car with Paddy the Devil. We crouched down in our seat, tucked our chins in our overcoat collars, and kept our hands in the pockets. It was a bad freezing night and the frost simply wouldn't stay out.

Paddy was quiet, like he usually was. He had a far-away look in his black eyes. This look of his always made me think of the eyes of an Indian chief. Now and then he would lift his thick, hairy hand and give his big, coaly mustache a slow twist, and when he did he would look down at me and shake his head a couple of times, but never say a word. I wondered about these looks, and I wanted the worst way to ask him why he had taken up with me after the camp's shutdown, when so many of the old-time team hands were anxious for his company on the road to the South. But I didn't bother him with my curiosity, for I had heard too many team hands say that about the most dangerous thing a man could do was to bother Paddy the Devil when he was thinking.

I had a lot of good stuff to think about now myself. People had always said I would never amount to much;

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but as I sat there in the smoker of the branch-line train and thought over the last two months, it seemed I had a better start in life than ninety-nine out of a hundred sixteen-year-olds could show. I had gone through some mighty hard experiences to learn the way to a man's job; I had held four aces in a big grading camp poker game and beat one of the toughest gamblers in the West; and now I was a regular monikered member of the highest and grandest tribe of workingmen in the whole country, the hobo team hands; and I had left camp as the side-kick of Paddy the Devil, who had the name of being the best battler who had ever knocked out a miner, bloodied a yegg's nose or slapped a bread-and-butter-john. And I had a hundred dollars sewn in my undershirt, and forty more in my pocket. The only trouble I had was that I couldn't see much ahead to live for now.

The car shivered and groaned and squeaked as it was jerked along over the rickety railroad. The lights got dimmer every minute in the thick smoke. I had eaten a big supper and it still felt comfortable inside. I drowsed down and went to dreaming about the things that might be ahead for me. The miners up in the head end of the car were yelling and singing, and spitting tobacco juice out in the aisle; and the team hands farther back from the stove were doing the same things. The two tribes looked a good deal alike. But they were not and they'd have some bitter fights in Shoshone. Before morning, too. I imagined them fighting for a while; I was seeing Paddy the Devil knocking miners right and left; then the yells and songs were only noise, no more than a wind in my ears. I dreamed about the things I would do with my stake. I saw myself going into the Shoshone saloon, ordering drinks for everybody, passing out a dollar apiece to the team hands who were broke, telling the tale of the four aces, while the great Paddy the Devil stood by me and backed up the amazing and

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wonderful story. Then it was likely that Paddy and I would take to the road, southbound, away from the snowballs, down to Loss and Nawlins—I simply wouldn't have traded places with any boy alive. The dream was fine, but of course I didn't have any idea of what was really coming. You never do.

I kept drowsing along until my face touched the cold glass of the window and roused me. I rubbed off the fog, pressed my eyes against the glass, and looked out. The steep bank of a cut loomed blackly out there, and the old coach fairly squalled from the strain as it was swung around a sharp curve. Then, as we left the shadow of the big hill, I saw the lights of Shoshone some three miles away on a snowy sagebrush plain.

"Well, I guess we're about to the main line and have rid our last on the cushions," I said to Paddy the Devil.

He only made a quiet smile under his coaly mustache.

Before long we were jammed among big bodies in rough coats and stumbling down the car steps. The snow on the depot platform was tramped hard, but the wind kept a frosty powder of dry snow blowing, and this powder had the brightest sparkles when it drifted under the depot lights. The gangs of team hands and miners scrunched, scrunched, scrunched over the snow towards a row of saloons, where windows had a warm, welcoming shine.

Paddy and I were at the tail end of the procession. As we came up to the first saloon we heard some yells in front, and everybody stopped. Paddy stretched his neck and looked over the heads in front of him, then he said, most surprisedly: "Why, it's Gager!" And he was around the crowd in a second.

Paddy's words excited me quite a bit. Old Time Blackie, who, strange to say, was called his true name by most team hands, was as famous for his story-telling as Paddy the Devil was for his fighting. I remembered

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now some words Poker Tom Travis had once said about this Gager.

"He simply can't be beat for stories. He can tell them in ten differ'nt ways. Sometimes it's liberry talk he uses, sometimes it's plain team hand gab. He's ekally good at both. And he can talk like a logger, too, for he's *been* a logger. He's so good he could even talk like a miner right here in camp and get away with it. You don't find 'em any better than Gager for stories."

I followed Paddy the Devil around the crowd. There was a low lean-to against the side of the saloon, and in the shadow of its wall I saw the burly figure of a man. A smaller man, with a curly-rimmed team hand's hat on his head and a pipe in his mouth, was jumping in front of the burly man; and every time he jumped he would smack the burly's face with his fist. At each smack the burly would wave his hands, throw his head back, and yell: "Loog owit!"

"Here, Gager," said Paddy the Devil, grabbing him by the arm. "I never thought you'd come down to fightin'. And a Bohunk, too! Here, you, Gager!"

Gager whirled around. "Paddy! You great, dark devil, you!" And then they shook hands.

"How does it come you're fightin'?" asked Paddy. "You never did."

"I was singing," said Gager, "and he yelled. I was going it my best right here in the Sage Tree on that rare and noble logger ballad, 'The Little Black Bull'; but I had no more than got past the verse about the bull and the nine fat heifers in the valley and the chorus which booms along like this——" and here Gager went to singing in the deepest, mellowest voice:

"The little black bull came down from the mountains—
Houston, Johnnie Houston!

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Oh, the little black bull came down from the mountains
A long time ay-go!"

"——when he started yelling a Bohunk ballad and stamping a jig besides. I fired all the parts of speech at him, but it was no use. What is eloquence to a Bohunk? He kept on bawling his ballad. I hauled him into the street then, and here I rumpused him. It was just rumpusing, you great, dark devil; no fighting.

The rest of the crowd was tramping on into the saloon now, and the three of us turned to go along. But just then the big Bohunk seemed to begin to get his wrath up, for he made a sudden leap at Gager with a knife. Paddy the Devil knocked the Bohunk down, and then we went on to the saloon, leaving him sprawled out in the snow.

The Sage Tree was the biggest and most popular saloon in town. Already there was a double line along the bar, and all the chairs at tables in the back and all the kegs along the wall had men on them who were either too drunk or too poor to be. Many of the last were team hands and they all got up to meet our gang. We got a section of the bar for our own, each man soon had a glass of dirty-looking bar whisky in his hand, and then a roar of talk went up. It was mostly personal questions and answers at first: "Well, Underwear, where you been hangin' out?" "Up to Hales & Crane's mostly." "Yay, there, Spot Evans! Ain't met up with you sence we built the North Bank." "Shore 'nuf. How you stackin', Google Eye?" "Goin' to shack up this winter, Poker Tom?" "Reckon not, Wingie Butts. Bound fer Nawlins."

Paddy the Devil was silent as he drank, and no one was speaking to him. But he was the center of the gang; and the looks the team hands kept giving him showed plainly enough who was to be the leader here whenever any leading was to be done. He was leaning

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sideways on the bar and keeping his gaze fixed on the miners next to us. I was standing behind him and I noticed that the muscles of his neck were tightening now and then.

In front of Paddy, Len Gager was slowly shaking his glass of whisky and looking down in it like he was seeing some wonderful pictures there. Gager was dressed like the others, but he looked different somehow. He was a heavy-set man and was thick and powerful-looking from his chin on down. His cheeks were fat and heavy enough, but his chin had a kind of delicate, pointed shape to it; his thin lips were so lively with quick little expressions that his mouth appeared strange when you were only used to seeing men use their mouths to eat, talk and chew tobacco with. Gager's nose had been broken, I could see, but it was an unusually thin and handsome nose, anyway. One of his ears had been partly chewed off and was pretty bad to look at. But you forgot this ear and his broken nose when you saw his eyes. They were the blackest, liveliest eyes! No they weren't, either. They were a soft, dark brown and they appeared dull and sleepy as he stared into his whisky glass. But now he grinned up at Paddy the Devil, and they were a snapping black again. I gave Gager's eyes up. His long, level eyebrows were thick and black. His forehead was high and rounding and it was red-complected to where the black hair sprung straight up from it and waved back under the side-cocked team hand hat. He was wearing a blue serge suit, a black sateen shirt, but no necktie, of course. He looked to be no more than thirty-five and was a real handsome man, though he was kind of fat.

"You, Gager!" Paddy's voice boomed out. "Wasn't we to meet in Loss Christmas? Let's hear why you made this gypo town. Explain yourself!"

"It's easy to tell," said Google Eye Murphy. "Gager

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was cleaned by a red-headed woman in another gypo burg—none but Pocaloo. He went the route like a plain, ornery team hand. I know the story and I've told it all. They ain't no more."

"Ah," said Gager, "but they is, oh, garrulous Google.

"A red-headed woman." Gager's voice was deep and solemn, and he looked solemnly into his glass, which was empty now. "It is my saddest story. I was recuperating."

He stopped talking and looked up at Paddy the Devil in a sly way. Right away Paddy thumped the bar with his big fist.

"Fill 'em up!"

In two more minutes we had warmed our innards again with the rank bar whisky.

"One more time!"

And again little glassfuls of scorching liquor were poured down our throats.

"The third round on Paddy the Devil!"

When this round was downed, Paddy wiped his mustache with a grand swipe, threw a wallet on the bar, pulled three twenty-dollar gold pieces from it, and swept them toward the bartender.

"Change in silver dollars!"

And when the change was in his paws he roared: "Anyone who needs eatin' money or the price of a flop, step up!"

A dozen team hands and a few hard-rock men crowded up and got a dollar apiece. Two miners left their gang, and each one had a silver dollar from Paddy the Devil. The rest of the change was still shining on the bar. Again Paddy made a grand motion for the bartender and ordered another round. There was still a pile of silver on the bar. Now he turned his fierce stare on Gager.

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"Take the pile. And now tell it right," said Paddy the Devil.

I had forgotten Gager and his story in watching Paddy. My head felt hot inside, and I seemed to be looking through a bright mist, but this only made him appear nobler to me. He stood proud and strong as a tree, leaning against the bar just like a pine tree leans toward a cliff on a steep mountainside sometimes. That was how he appeared to me, after four drinks of rotten whisky.

Gager's face had become more solemn than ever. He, and the other team hands, too, had seemed to grow smaller as I watched Paddy the Devil; and Gager's voice sounded thin and far-away at first. Then his rich, mellow talk began to tickle my ears and he brought me right under a spell. What he told didn't amount to much, maybe; but his voice and motions made it sound amazing.

"I was sick," said Gager. "A man must be, you know, before he can recuperate. I was taken with my misery first when I was riding the guts of a Pullman, making the Overland from Shy. I debarked in Pocaloo. There I met Ragged Britches Smith. He had his gypo fresno outfit on a ditch job twenty-five miles out. You all know Gager's rule: The big job, or none. But do not consider the keeping of rules or the breaking of rules, my comrades. I had to break mine, else steal, beg or perish. The day of the big job is done in the West; and like you, oh, brethren, I am not the man to be debased for the sake of a rule."

"Come on! Come on!" yelled Google Eye. "Don't try to talk us away from that woman!"

"I had skinned a plow team for Ragged Britches on the Western Pacific," Gager went on, not even rolling his black eyes at Google Eye Murphy. "And I told

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him I'd take such a job now. Work would probably ease the misery in my innards.

"And it did. But not so much as the grub aggravated it. The grub was fairly sickening to everybody; but it was especially sickening to me on account of the fat pork. Fat pork is an evil. Salt pork is evil doubled. Ragged Britches fed salt fat pork mainly in this camp. But I had set in here to make my winter stake, and I stayed on. I stayed on even after I got jug-headed and had no stories for the evening hours. I stayed on even after I began to get the name of a bunkhouse crank. I have a stubborn streak. Ere long I was cranking all day at my work. And then I got to cranking o' nights. In my sleep, I mean. I had dreams in which I appeared as a regular monster of a crank. I would see myself clipping the ears from mules with my frog-sticker, jabbing pitchforks into 'em from behind, pouring hot coffee down the cook's neck, shagging Ragged Britches over the camp in his underclothes. It was very terrible.

"I stood it and stayed on. But when I got to dreaming of monstrous and terrible things being done to *me*, I said to myself it was too much, and something had to be done about this misery of mine. But I was still stubborn and stayed on, though these new dreams were very, very terrible indeed.

"One night, oh, beloved! I dreamed the devil was a mule. He appeared with a long, snaky, hook-ended tail instead of the regular shave-tail, and he had sharp horns where his ears should have waggled. He was a strawberry roan and sharp-shod. I had never heard of the devil taking this shape before. I was surprised, as you may imagine. But I was proud also to think I was seeing something new. It was a wonder that I didn't wake up. But I slept on.

"The strawberry roan devil then stood on his hind

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legs and put one foot on the edge of my bunk and he set the other squarely on my stomach. That was when I discovered that he was sharp-shod. He looked down at me, with fire-eyes, then he made a fierce twist with his sharp-shod foot, gouging my stomach. I yelled then, and the strawberry roan mule devil lifted up his chin, curled his nose, showed his teeth, which were snowily white in the dark, and seemed to laugh. That was the infernalest laugh I ever heard. It was mule bray and devil squeal in one wild howl, and it made my blood run cold. I screamed again and the devil lifted his other front foot from the bed and fetched me a cruel crack on the head.

"I awoke instantaneously, oh, my fellows! Zish! Tlunk! I was cracked on the head again, not in a dream this time. Some crank had heaved a number-twelve shoe at me. And even the gentlest team hands were bawling: 'Lay off!' 'Choke it!' 'Go get a pill!' I was too shamed to answer. I got up and went out to the cookhouse, where I ate a cup of ground coffee for my heartburn. But the misery was very violent now and I slept no more the night. I sat up and smoked dolefully.

"Morning I informed Ragged Britches I was too sick to team the day. And when the tribe had gone to work I went to the commissary for some pills or salts. The inkslinger was a college kid from Shy and he almost had run Ragged Britches crazy with his newfangled notions, for these were always bringing raging words from the engineers and the main contractors. The inkslinger had been buckled and bitted in this respect; but now he had a new notion for me. Instead of pilling or salting me without question, he commenced to quiz me about this and about that, with much wise eying over his specs; and I humored him by telling of my dreams and all, hoping I'd then get pills or salts without more to do.

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"But no. This educated gazoony leaned back in chair, tapped the table with a pencil, and began to allow. He allowed my stomach was all right, but that I had a sick mind. I told him my head hadn't hurt a particle, except from the shoe-lump. He said: 'None of your prepost'rus humor, my man, or I won't cure you.' I sighed meekly, and meekly I listened.

"And he told me that dreams are never caused by miseries of the stomach, as I had always heard; but they come, he said, from sick minds.

" 'A mind sickens,' said the inkslinger, 'when it wants something and can't get it. Sometimes it's glory, sometimes it's wealth, sometimes it's a woman. Usually it's a woman the mind wants the worst, but it never knows for sure. That is the funny part of it. When your mind gets to wanting in the worst way, you begin to dream; and whatever you are wanting, your dreams will show what it is, and they will show exactly how much of it you need, and how truly you need it. Very sadly you need your want when you dream, as a rule, for the mind does not dream until it is sick from its want.

" 'Now, Mr. Gager,' said the inkslinger, 'I am a dream expert. Tell me your dream, I'll tell you your want, then you can at once obtain the object of your desire, ridding yourself of your misery, winning back to health and happiness.'

"He sounded like a phrenologist or a clairvoyant, but I was curious to see how his new idea worked. So I told him about the devil appearing in my dream as a strawberry roan mule. His eyes were shining through his specs when I was done; he leapt to his feet and smacked his hands together.

" 'Marvelous! Wonderful! Glorious! Oh, how grandly simple and clear!' he shouted. 'I can tell you your trouble without a particle of research in my deep,

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wide books. You, my man, have inherited a powerful primorjal desire for a red-headed woman, and you have never had one yet. Have you? No? Ah, I am right. The books are right. Now, my man, you must find yourself a real red-headed woman; not an auburn one, mind, nor a pink-yellow one either; only a genuine brick blonde will do for you, my dear fellow. Find such a one and your dreams will go; your sick mind will be cured. Now you have heard enough. I must get back to my figures.'

"I thought he had prescribed about the best medicine ever heard of, oh, my countrymen! and I was about to ask him if he had any red-headed women in mind who would do for my cure; but just then I was taken with a cramp and I told him I'd be glad to follow his advice, but I'd be obliged if he'd let me tackle the pills and salts, besides. The inkslinger only said: 'Pooh-pooh!' and then turned back to his figures. I was seized with another cramp. There seemed to be nothing for it but a fit. So I threw one.

"I did put it on. I wriggled and bounced about the commissary floor with all my energy and strength. I knocked his table over. I frothed at the mouth. And as a climax I bit his leg.

"The inkslinger shrieked: 'My God! He's dying!' He rushed to the telephone and ordered a doctor. Well, to make a long story short, the croaker dashed out in his buckboard, gave me some pills and salts, ordered me to cut out the fat pork, left a bill for sixty-five dollars—headquarters town was twenty-five miles from the camp—and then rolled back over the desert again. I was paying hospital fee; and of course Ragged Britches had to stand for the bill. This hurt him so that he fired the inkslinger.

"I stayed on until my winter stake was made, though the misery and the dreams kept returning regularly.

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In Pocaloo I met a red-headed woman, a genuine brick blonde. She seemed to admire me. And as I looked at her shining hair I began to think seriously, for the first time, about what the inkslinger had told me. I still had the dreams; there *was* a chance that they were caused by a sick mind; it was better, I decided, not to take any risks; so I went to recuperating with this red-headed woman. And, do you know, that inkslinger proved to be right! I'd write a testimonial for him any day. It cost me my winter stake, but that red-headed woman recuperated my mind in a wonderful fashion.

"It's perilous to be busted in a time when the snowballs are pounding you on the tail, *cameradoes!* but it is better than going through a winter with a sick mind. I have done my best for mine. And the medicine, my lads, was very glorious.

"Thus ends the story. Now you know, oh, *Americanoes*, why I am dependent on the mercies of my comrade, the great dark devil. *Allons!* I am athirst."

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IV

I HAD become tremendously interested in Gager's story, which seemed about the most amazing one I had ever heard. I ransacked my mind for all the stories about red-headed women I had heard among the cow hands at home and the farm hands at the school; and I remembered some good ones, but none so amazing as Gager's. Spot Evans had ordered another round of drinks, and I was thinking so much about the story I didn't notice that Paddy the Devil had pushed my whisky glass away until the bartender shoved a small beer towards me. I took it without a word. Whatever Paddy wanted was right with me.

"Time fer a song," said Paddy the Devil to Poker Tom, who was even a better singer than Gager.

"Sing 'The Red-headed Woman' fer Old Time Blackie!" someone yelled.

Poker Tom swung into the ballad at once. He kept his face as solemn as a revivalist's while he sang, and he rolled each word out with a soft, mellow, throaty sound. Everybody in the saloon listened quietly until he got to a verse that went like this:

Then an unshaven miner came down from the sticks,
With a sackful of gold all dug out of the cricks.
He roared: "I'm a wild burly called Pick Handle Slim!"
But that red-headed woman made a fool out of him.

Then came the chorus again:

Here I sit in jail, with my back to the wall,
And a red-headed woman was the cause of it all!

Poker Tom had just finished the last line of the chorus

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when three big mackinawed men who looked very much alike, and who had been drinking with the miners, crowded into our gang and began to threaten the singer.

"You're quittin' that song right now," growled the biggest and oldest-looking of the three. Then he flashed a wicked stare around at the rest of us. "And if I hear the good and noble word 'miner' from any of you dirty gradin' stiffs jest one more time, the man that says it'll have the three Helan boys to lick!"

"Miners," said Paddy the Devil, still leaning calmly against the bar, "that was my song—miners."

Now I could see the muscles in the back of his neck working again; and there was the fighting red creeping up into his black hair and blooming on the tips of his ears. My heart began to pound. There was nothing I wanted more than to see Paddy the Devil in a first-rate fight, one that would make him work a little and put on a good show. The three Helan boys could probably put up a fair battle with him, for they were tough and husky-looking; but still, there were only three of them and the fight would very likely be a short one.

The oldest Helan boy began to give Paddy a cussing, and he gave it to him up one side and down the other. Paddy listened patiently for a while, then he suddenly straightened up, heaved off his mackinaw; and then he fetched the Helan man a violent jolt in the mouth that knocked him clean over among the beer kegs, and the blood was just streaming from his split lips.

"Here, you fellers!" the bartender yelled. "I keep the back room there cleared for rumpuses. If you fellers are bound to rumpus, you do it back there!"

Paddy the Devil strode over to the door and swung it open. He stood there for a second, his big chest heaving and his eyes shining with a hot glare, but otherwise not showing much excitement.

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"Come all three, or one at a time! I'm a-waitin'!" he roared.

The oldest Helan pulled himself up from among the beer kegs, shed his mackinaw, motioned to the other two, who had already stripped off their coats; and then the three of them charged Paddy the Devil. He leaped back to the wall, and braced himself under a high window, through which the moonlight shone. The Helans lunged into the room. The bartender slammed the door behind them—and locked it!

It seemed a much longer time, but it was hardly more than five minutes that we crowded before the door and waited, listening to the grunts, groans, smacks and thuds that sounded inside. There was a hard tramp of feet at first, and a few yells, and now and again the door would crack when the fighters crashed against it. Gager stood by me, and I saw that he was listening anxiously; then his thin lips worked into a grin, and he said: "It is going too easy for the Devil; he won't get much glory out of this." Then Gager moved back to the bar and stood looking at himself in the big mirror on the wall.

I felt like kicking him for acting so calm, I wanted so much to let out a few excited whoops for Paddy myself. But I didn't, and all the rest of the crowd was quiet until the door split with a fearful crack and came banging down with the youngest Helan on top of it. He had been hit in the stomach, and he just lay there, gasping for breath. As the lamplight poured into the back room I saw the oldest Helan stretched out and the middle one staggering to his feet. Paddy the Devil stood over them, looking as big to me as a giant.

"Are you licked, you miners?" he panted.

"We are," said the middle Helan, like a man.

Then Paddy the Devil tramped bravely from the room and went out to the pump to wash off the blood. Some

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of the miners helped the Helans out after him. When Paddy came back I was proud to see that a torn shirt and a bruise over one eye and skinned knuckles were his only signs of battle. But Gager wasn't satisfied.

"You have an eye yellowed. And you look sad," he said. "It wasn't a very glorious fight, I admit, but you could be a little proud of it. You look like a sad devil. What is the matter with us, Paddy? Are we aging? Or is it the spirit of the times?"

"The youngest one is only a kid. It's rotten to hit a kid," said Paddy the Devil, as he pulled his mackinaw back on.

Then he went to looking down at me with such a solemn expression that I felt uncomfortable. I knew that kind of expression; it was the kind people had always put on when they talked about my natural-born meanness and urged me to do better, and I was worried to see it on Paddy's face. Just as he was about to say something to me, the bartender spoke to him.

"You busted the winder and smashed the door," he said, in a polite voice. "I always charge six dollars fer the winder. As fer the door, I don't know. It was never busted completely before. Say six fer it, too. Twelve dollars all told. You pay me six and I'll collect six from the Helans. Is that fair enough?"

Paddy agreed that it was and paid up. Then he went to staring down at me again; and he stared so mournfully that I was worried worse than ever; and I was thankful to Slue Foot Niergard when he ordered another round of drinks. But Paddy the Devil waved the team hands away from us.

"Me and Gager and Appanoose is goin' to mope," he said.

That was all, but the way he said it the team hands knew he didn't expect to be bothered with anyone else. They made way for us and yelled "So long!" and "See

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you all in the South!" as we passed out. I was worried more than ever. This wasn't Paddy the Devil's usual way and I knew it. It looked like he had something in mind for me that I wouldn't like. He hadn't let me spend a cent or get tight—"Consarn it," I thought, "I hope he don't get unreasonable." But I was afraid he would.

I hated to leave the warm, bright saloon and all the excitement there, and I stopped in the door for a last look back.

The mirror and the glasses and bottles back of the bar reflected the dim lights in a sparkling shine and seemed to make a glow over the fat back of the busy bartender and on the lean, brown faces in front of the bar. There were little dull flashes of light in the glasses of dark whisky, too; and light in the glasses of beer, gold sparkles; and a cheerful changing light in the flames that waved and curled in the open door of the heater; and dim, smoky light over the men who were sprawled out in the chairs and on the kegs along the wall. There was a clinking of glasses. And a humming sound of talk. I liked the different lights and the sounds. I saw the miners glaring fiercely at the team hands and the team hands glaring back, and my heart pounded again. Plague take these notions about doing better! If it wasn't Paddy the Devil—"Come on, you, Appanoose!" I pushed slowly through the swinging doors, still looking back.

A sheep-herder, alone at the upper end of the bar, appeared to be having a fit. He was wearing a low-crowned white hat with a wide, stiff brim and a band of rattlesnake skin. He had jammed it down to his eyes, which were popping out in a glassy stare that made me think of two big blue and white marbles. He dropped his head down over the bar until his long yellow mustache was touching it. He spluttered over the bar

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a couple of times, then he suddenly threw back his head and roared out a "b-a-a-a-a!" so loud that everyone turned to look at him. "B-a-a-a-a!" he went, three or four times more. And then he yanked a gun out of his hip pocket and started shooting into the ceiling, "b-a-a-a-aing" in a roar at every shot. I ducked through the door just as the bartender knocked him out with a billy. I bumped into Gager.

"Come on, little one," he said. "The great dark devil is waiting. There'll be trouble around this saloon yet!"

We scrunched over the crusty snow towards the depot. The wind was howling its wildest through the telegraph wires and growling down among the black shadows of the box cars on the sidetracks; and back there on the saloons and stores it was whipping the snow off the roofs; and down on the sidewalks thin clouds of powdered snow drifted sparklingly through the patches of light from the windows. The moon was full and shone now through the limbs of a row of cottonwoods a ways back from the buildings. These limbs had been stripped by the wind, and the trees looked bare and frozen and ruined. They made me think somehow of oat stalks, when I had used to reach down with my hand and snatch the grain off in my grip. The wind had been frolicking like a rough, burly boy with the cottonwood trees. The stars were very dim, and I thought they might be snuggling away from the fearful cold. The moon shone and shone, but she looked frozen.

"Come on, little one," called Gager. "Fun and trouble are no more."

Looking up over the roofs and thinking for a minute about the trees and the moon and the stars, I'd almost forgotten about the saloon and the burly men; and I'd about forgotten what heroes I was traveling with and that I was a grown-up hobo laborer myself now. That is, I was if Paddy the Devil would let me be. Anyhow,

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the tough business of getting over the road was ahead, and I had no right to be mooning around. So I followed on.

I didn't see any freight train, and I hadn't heard one whistle; but I supposed that Paddy the Devil knew of some good place in the yards to lie and wait and that we would go there. But no; he gave me a big surprise; he marched right on to the depot and into the waiting room, and there were women there, too. Of course they were only ranch women and town women with their husbands and children, but Paddy the Devil wasn't used to them and I was surprised that he'd want to wait around them for a freight. He didn't take a seat among them, but marched straight for the ticket window. Just before he reached it he turned around to Gager.

"Maybe I'd better warn you we're ridin' the cushions to Boise," said Paddy. "It's *him*, see?" And he waggled his big finger at me.

Well, I'd known *something* was coming, but I'd never imagined anything so bad as this. If I was going to travel on the cushions I might as well go back home and be done with it. What was the use of working my head off and going through all kinds of hardships to be a grown-up hobo laborer, I asked myself, if I had to ride from town to town like ranch women with their husbands and kids? Nobody needed to be a hobo laborer to do that. Hell and creation! if Paddy the Devil was aiming to make me do better, and he certainly was, where would I wind up, anyway? Well, I'd just be dod-banged—but then I sighed and settled myself down and watched Paddy buy the tickets. It was no use talking. It never is.

The three of us sat down in a corner. Paddy wasn't saying a word and neither was Gager; they felt out of place, and I could see it made them uncomfortable for the women and their husbands and children to

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stare at them. One little tike about seven years old came over close and stood looking curiously at Paddy the Devil. I reached out and felt his muscle and called him a gazoony and a fuzz-face. He grinned and seemed anxious to get acquainted. And he looked mighty proud and pleased when Paddy the Devil held out his paw and said bashfully: "'lo, bub." The tike's mother saw Paddy's skinned knuckles and whooped down on her child. She cracked him one on the ear and jerked him back into the seat by her side. He sat there squalling, his overcoat bulging up around his chin, his cap down over one ear; rubbing his eyes with his two fists, and looking from between them at Paddy the Devil. He was just about old enough to know a real hero when he saw one, and I guess that he wanted to be a hobo laborer as bad as I did.

We sat on there, watching the kid, and saying nothing. The big stove was roaring, and I got to feeling drowsy from the warmth and the rotten whisky I had drunk. The women were all leaning over their husbands and children to gabble to one another. They made quite a noise, but pretty soon I went to sleep anyhow. I had a few dreams as I snoozed away, and finally, it was a funny thing, but I did nothing else than dream about Gager's strawberry roan mule devil.

The mule was after me and I was just tearing it through the sagebrush when Gager shook me awake. I wanted to ask him if there really *was* anything to that sick mind business, for this dream began to worry me right away; but the passenger was roaring in and the people were all crowding for the door.

The train hauled up and the women and their menfolks and children started climbing into the chair cars, but Paddy and Gager and I tramped ahead for the smoker. Just as we reached the steps we noticed a commotion around the tender. The fireman had let the big

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pipe rattle back up to the tank. Now he jumped down on the blind, the engineer came over the tender behind him, the brakeman yelled at the baggagemen; and we all went running.

"A frozen fool on the head end, I imagine," said Gager.

And that was the cause of the excitement, sure enough. The moonlight struck sideways between the mail car and the tender and made a pale shine over three men on the narrow platform; and the man in the middle was still. His mittened hands were gripping the handrail around the tender. The engineer and the fireman were tugging at his wrists, trying to pull his hands loose. But they were frozen in a tight grip.

"Solider'n hell!" yelled the engineer. "Gotta steam 'em off! Git yer hose, you, Slim!"

The fireman scrambled up over the tender and leaped down the coal pile for the cab. Other people came running now, and Paddy, Gager and I were squeezed close. The frozen hobo was so still that I got the creeps looking at him. He was leaning forward a little, his head down so that his nose almost touched the tender wall, and his hands seemed to be gripped *so* tight around the rail. He looked like he might be asleep and dreaming that the train was going sixty an hour around the curves.

"Bread-and-butter-john," said Gager. "Look at the home-made patch on his pants. One shoe is different from the other. Look how long his hair is. And he hasn't shaved for a week. Easy to tell him. Thought he'd 'a' known better. Pore old bum. Never no use to nobody. Only a nuisance. And only making a small commotion now."

The fireman climbed back up the coal pile now with a hose spouting clouds of steam which were whirled away in white puffs by the wind. I heard the steam hissing

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upon the hands of the frozen john, but I didn't look at them. For a long minute I watched those bright cottony puffs of steam float up, fade against the stars, and suddenly vanish out. I looked down again when I heard the crowd give one big sigh.

They pulled the old john's hands loose and swung him down to a baggage truck. He seemed stiff as a board and they handled him with no trouble now. As he lay on his back his forearms stuck up from his sides; and the way his hands kind of drooped from them, it looked like something had just been taken away from him and he had given it up in despair. His head was turned a little to one side and I looked into his face. His eyes were so hollow that there were shadows on the closed lids. His eyelashes sparkled with little white icicles. And his mustache was all coated over with ice. His sunken cheeks were yellow under the gray stubble. He certainly looked pitiful; and sickening, somehow.

The baggagemen trundled him away; the engineer and fireman got back to their warm cab; some of us climbed into the cars, and the rest of the crowd went over to the saloons; the conductor swung a lantern; and the train roared out into the sagebrush and rocks and snow, at a high speed to make up lost time.

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V

"A pore dead soul."

"He was a john, Gager."

"Whatever he was, it's just one more pore dead soul now, Paddy. He has passed through the door where prejudices and vanities cannot pass, where the glory and the despair, the prides and the dejections of life are all left behind; he has gone out, Paddy, not to the kingdom of heaven, I allow, but to the democracy of hell, where there ain't no working stiffs and no johns and yeggs and no bulls and bosses, but just pore dead souls in the fiery darkness. Let you fight and toil away, you great dark devil, you, let me yarn and toil away, let the little one here flush up in the pride of his youth, let the bosses up to the highest strut and brag, and let us all rejoice in the world around while we may, for we'll all be in hell together to-morrow."

"You make me think of how the buck used to talk when I was a younger lad'n this one, Gager. I ought to listened. But young uns never will."

"No difference when your years are done, Paddy. All in hell together to-morrow. Working and fighting and rearing around over the land—it's all no use and no good. When that pore dead soul was alive he was a john we despised. That's how we keep going. Every man lives on his prejudices."

"You must be right, Gager. We see the john and the yegg and that makes us proud. The main contractor sees us and he is the same way. We don't often enough look up and try to do better."

Paddy heaved a big sigh then, and Gager heaved one,

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too, and both sighs were very mournful to hear. I was sitting next to the window in a seat near the back end of the smoker, Paddy the Devil was by my side, and Gager sat facing us. I couldn't get the idea of what they were talking about, and I didn't try to. It sounded too much like the talk I had used to hear so much from the Methodists and the Presbyterians. I was sorry myself that the poor old john had frozen himself, but I couldn't see the sense of a lot of revival moaning about it. It didn't sound natural to Paddy and Gager, either. I felt relieved when Gager pulled a quart of whisky from his inside pocket, uncorked it, and passed it over to Paddy the Devil. Paddy took a big swig, handed it back, and Gager swallowed a good half pint.

"I snared it while you were whipping the Helans," he said, snapping his eyes and wiping his mouth. "It is proper pay for the advertising you gave the saloon."

"I might try a swaller myself," I said, seeing Gager put the bottle back into his pocket.

"No," said Paddy. "No more licker fer you, if I know it. No more hoboin', either. You mind what I'm tellin' you. Seein' that pore old john back there made me full and determined to do what was right by you, and nothin' else."

Well, there it was, just as I had been suspicioning right along it would be. He had got the idea somehow at Hales & Crane's that I should do better, and it had grown and grown in him, and now this old john getting himself frozen had made the idea bloom out full force. And there it was. And I'd very likely do better, too, concern it; for if anyone could make me do it, Paddy the Devil could. I saw some rough times ahead and——

"Say," I asked suddenly. "You ain't goin' to keep me from goin' to Cal, are you, Paddy?"

Paddy didn't look at me. He leaned over and tapped Gager on the knee with a thick finger.

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"You talk, Gager," he said. "You tell him jest what it means to be a team hand right. You con-*vince* him!"

Gager tilted the bottle up and took another long drink. Then he took a long, deep look at me, squinting his left eye and cocking his right eyebrow up until his dark eye was shining from a regular circle. He heaved another big sigh.

"I have lived in the light of printed words," he said, in a low, sad voice. "For many a day I have seen the life around in a light of books. Fancies and dreams, oh, little one! The pore old john as a soul gone into the darkness—Paddy here as the old-time hero spirit renewed. Are you his young shadow? Might you have the substance of him some day? I can see you—so! Ah, well. Listen, little one, and I'll sing the epic of the team hand tribe. How will you listen? Then I shall know. Canto the First—ah-hem!"

I was curious to know what Gager was talking about, but I didn't think it was likely I would learn, for he kept looking more and more like an inspired minister all the time, and at first I couldn't understand him any better than I could understand Mr. Borah, who was greatly admired all over Idaho for the way he could roll out big words without a hitch at Fourth of July celebrations. Gager could do it, too.

"I have written it," said Gager, after setting the bottle down and looking up solemnly for a minute at the car roof. Now he waved his hand and thumped his chest. "But it is only in my heart. What I write I burn. My words are for singing. And now I sing the team hand tribe."

"He's goin' it," said Paddy the Devil, giving me a heavy nudge with his elbow. "Keep your ears open, young un."

Gager drank again.

"The god of adventure survived long after his race

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was gone," said Gager then, in a singing voice. "My day is late, but I have seen his altars in the West. Aye, he passed over from wars and explorations and found his own in the pioneers of the industrial age. In the winning of the West, smoke ascended to him from a thousand campfires each night, and each day dust rolled up to him in a thousand clouds from the pioneer trail.

"Farmers and freighters and fighters. Plows and shovels and arms. The driver with his wagon and team. The rider with his tough, lean horse. The Oregon Trail, deep-rutted and wide. Men who lived by their muscle made it so. They made ranches and towns and mines. Adventure ruled all, the god of the pioneer right-of-way.

"You know the lore of the Indian Wars. You have heard the tales of the one-time trips made over the plains by bands of farm-seekers. You know the stories of the cattle and mining towns, of stations and posts and forts; but what of the toil of the trail, the commerce on the right-of-way?

"Sahara has her caravans; we know that commerce of the sands, have heard the tinkle of the camel's bell. The ox-teams of the Veldt, the elephant trains of Bengal, aye, even the dog-sleds of Alaska—all such commerce has been bravely sung. But the toil of this Empire is out of mind.

"True enough, we know the stage-driver, the hauler of passengers and mail on the old frontier. Riders for cattle, Indian-chasers, the diggers in the mining towns —these have been sung. The pioneer farmers who made one drive over the trail to the West are not forgotten. But forgotten is the old team hand tribe whose day's work was back and forth over this trail, the year around; forgotten are the men who toiled year after year through the worst of peril and hardship; the men who handled the slashers and lines over the long teams of

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the supply trains. Who knows Jim Bridger now? Jim Bridger, the Old Man of the Mountains, the king of Western explorers, hunters, trappers, and scouts, but above all, the First Freighter, the maker of the Oregon Trail? Jim Bridger, who showed the way to the pioneers. Jim Bridger, whose freighted supplies let the emigrant trains move on. The first of the Western team hands was the Old Man of the Mountains, but he is forgotten now, like the other freighters of the old days; and we are asked to admire the fame of the meat contractor who butchered buffalos along the U.P. right-of-way.

"And so it was with the dirt-moving team hand who toiled his twelve hours a day in the cuts and borrow pits of Western railroads. The freighter passed, a forgotten pioneer; the railroad-builder is passing now, forgotten, too. They died on the job, the old-timers did, and they were buried at the place of their toil. Soon forgotten. Adventurers all, unloved, unknown—why should anyone care to remember their kind? But every freight station had its yards of graves in the old times. And every railroad had many burials along its right-of-ways; burials of lone, obscure laborers, soon forgotten. Well, they wouldn't be wanting glory, I allow; they ended on the big, far job, and that was enough. The old-time team hands had what they wanted, and that is more than the tribe can say now. The big jobs have about seen their day. The West is won. Where'll we find our god of adventure, you great dark devil, you? Where'll we go? There's a dam in Arizona, a canal in Panama, and in the Andes Mountains—but what am I sayin' or singin'? There are mists about. I must—be—drunk."

"Buck up, Gager," said Paddy. "We got to con*vince* him, you know."

"I want to know about these big jobs," I said.

Gager sighed and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand. Then he took another swig from the bottle.

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And now he smiled so that his upper lip curled, showing his top teeth, his gaze got misty and far-away, and his face positively glowed.

"The big job," his singing voice said. "There is a magic in it that nets us all. What do we care for our fate, we of the last tribe of adventurers? We are working fools, and like fools we sing; for there is a secret in our lives which all of us know, but few can say. The talking and singing of bunkhouse nights, the fighting and drinking and woman-chasing of blow-ins, and the reckless roving on the road—these all men can enjoy and understand. But why will we go out from the safe and soft life of cities and towns to live the bitter hardships of toil in the desolate mountains and desert lands?

"It's the big job, Appanoose Jim; it's the big job all the time. If you are a team hand right, no matter where you are, when you hear of a big job opening up, there's where you get a hankering to go. I was in Baltimore when the Milwaukee began to build. I'd been teaming in town for the winter. I was housed, happy and snug, with a little French widow. I met Yam Morgan. 'The big job,' was all he needed to say. Farewell, little woman; farewell, little work; Gager goes out on a manifest freight. There was talk all over the country about the Milwaukee; thousands and thousands of workingmen were hoboing it from everywhere to the Dakota prairie and the Montana mountains; and what to Gager then was small work in Baltimore? He was on his way.

"Out from Mandan, North Dakota, then, to toil in the choking dust of the Milwaukee right-of-way. From St. Paul to Seattle the camps were stretched along. The big job. And we were there, we old-time team hands with the records of other big jobs behind us; old campaigners showing the new lads the glory that was back of our hardships and loneliness and mean labor, in the talk of bunkhouse nights. Tales were told of the

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levee camps, and the history of the long fight against the flood waters of the Mississip' shone in these tales. The damming of rivers, the reclaiming of deserts, the making of high bridges, long, long tunnels and tremendous cuts away up in the Rockies—they were all told about as soldiers tell of grand battles. The days of big wars were over, but the days of big jobs were not yet past. It was war once for the adventurers; it was work now. It was the custom of our time. Thus the West was won, oh, little one, by workingmen who had the old fire in their souls, who toiled in camps on the line of the frontier, pushing it on and on with their efforts, their sweat and their blood. Thus the team hand dirt-movers, the heirs of the freighters, pushed out the old freight trails."

"And now," said Paddy, "what is it to be a team hand right? You got to con-*vince* him."

"That—oh, what does it matter? I talk for myself. I am weary," said Gager. He frowned at me. "But if he must know, it is quickly said. It simply means to go out for your labor in the kind of camps you know; to team ten hours a day from the cut to the fill and back again, with salt sweat to sting your eyes and hot dust to choke your breath; to leather your mules along, for there is always the gaffer, with his crooked-arm; to go to a tent at night that is far from the homes of women and all the soft and lovely things of life; to know salt pork, sour bread, tin plates on a bare board; to hear a story told around the fire. Toil hard and suffer loneliness in the camps; battle with yeggs and johns and shacks on the road; and then be put down for a john or a yegg by the scissor bills of the towns that have grown by the roads your labor built. Live so, and be despised. Die so, and be forgotten. Your sermon, Paddy. I am done. It is time for sleep."

"There," said Paddy to me. "Now, if you ain't con-*vinced*, you ought to be."

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I didn't answer him, but just watched Gager, who had pulled his hat down over his eyes, and was already beginning to nod against the window.

"Ah, the good old times. The dear old days. The lusty life," he mumbled to himself. "I wish I could sing."

"I guess you're con-*vinced*," said Paddy again, as he settled down into the car seat.

I just nodded, for I was feeling drowsy, and I didn't know exactly what he was getting at, anyway. Most of Gager's talk had sounded rich and fine, but I hadn't liked the last of it. However, it was all right with me, for I knew a man was apt to say anything when he was drunk. And Gager certainly was, as he had a perfect right to be. I didn't worry any more about it, but went right off to sleep.

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VI

GAGER and Paddy the Devil were tramping down a Boise street that led to the railroad yards, and I was trailing along behind them. We were on our way to the place where Honest John Malone was shacking up. I felt very good and comfortable inside from the roast chicken and hot mince pie I had just eaten at a Chink restaurant. I was wearing a big white Stetson with a curly rim, a heavy dark-red mackinaw, a pair of Levi Strauss overalls, and a pair of six-dollar brogans, all of which I had bought that morning, after we left the train. The weather had warmed up and a heavy snow was falling. The warm air smelled *so* good and the big wet snowflakes tickled my face. I tramped hard and heavy in the snow and tried to swagger my shoulders as Paddy the Devil did his. I puffed on my cob pipe, rolled a big chew of tobacco from one side of my mouth to the other, and ripped out all the team hand cusswords I could think of as I swung along. Paddy and Gager paid me no mind, but they were talking low and earnestly and I had an idea it was about me.

We found Honest John in a neat, clean room of considerable size. A fire was cracking away in a shiny black cookstove. In a home-made cupboard the dishes shone on paper-covered shelves. The pine floor was scrubbed clean. And the white oilcloth on the table, and the glass lamp hanging from the wall back of it, had the cleanest, shiniest look, too. And when Honest John came out from behind a newspaper, there was his old face, as red and shiny as a Jonathan apple, for all its wrinkles. The whole place smelled of soap. I looked

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for some old Baptist lady to stick her head out of the back room any minute and start screaming about the snow we had tracked in. But none did. Honest John lived alone.

He was a queer old team hand. Never drank. Hardly ever fought. And didn't talk very much. The strangest part of him was that he was a great reader and didn't care who knew it. He never hid himself away in the libraries, like Gager did; he would get a book and read right out in the open, even in the saloons. He didn't team much any more. He'd usually hobo a thousand miles or more every spring, get a job timekeeping in some team hand camp on a big job, work in the one place for seven or eight months, and then shack up in the handiest town. One winter it would be in Butte, the next in Galveston, the next in Minneapolis, and so on. The team hands put up with his strange ways, just as they did with Gager's. Not because he could tell stories or fight, for he couldn't, but because he was such a trusty banker. Whenever he was around, team hands who couldn't handle themselves would have Honest John take care of their stakes for them. He didn't drink, and he'd earned his moniker by being as honest as the sun is bright. Now, I soon found out, Paddy the Devil was going to trust Honest John to take care of me and help me to do better.

"I see something in him," Paddy told Honest John. "I know he'd amount to quite a bit if he could only get settled once. Trouble is, he's been took into the tribe and has got to be quite a team hand already. He'd most likely make a rippin' savage in time. Nobody could 'a' played them four aces better. He's gone pretty far. He couldn't get on with the scissor bills, even when he only chewed. And now he smokes, cusses, plays poker, and drinks hard licker besides. I don't know of anybody but you who might get him settled,

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Honest John. I ain't good fer him, and neither is Gager."

Paddy heaved a big sigh when he was done and got out his bandanna. He was sweating like a mule in August. He'd never made such a speech before in his life, I guess. Honest John sat looking at him, and then at me, frowning through his specs, and running his fingers through his thin, gray hair.

"Well and good," Honest John said finally. "I shall endeavor with him."

"Good enough." Paddy made the dishes rattle with his groan of relief. Then he looked his fiercest at me. "You mind now! I'll cave your head in if you don't. Jest let me ketch you on the road again!"

"I can attend to the chastisements myself." Honest John banged the table with a knotty fist.

Then I had to give him all my money but twenty dollars.

"You can hang on to that fer tobacco money," said Paddy.

"Are you and Gager ramblin' on to Cal, then?" I asked him.

"We are, Appanoose."

I'd have given a leg to have gone with them. But it was no use talking. No man is stubborner than when he is trying to make someone do better; and Paddy the Devil was the stubbornest man alive anyhow. I didn't try to argue; I just sat down in a dark corner and sucked on my pipe and sulked and said over and over: "I'll do better. I will like hell!" But of course I said it to myself.

Gager had been looking through a couple of books that were on the table, while Paddy and Honest John were fixing me up, and he hadn't said a word until now.

"I don't care for your books, Honest John," he

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said. "They all appear to be destitute of humor."

"I'm gettin' pretty patriarchyal, Gager," said Honest John. "And it ain't the thing fer a patriarchyal man to read fer fun. In short, Gager, a book must be destitute of humor or I simply won't have it. Not at my patriarchyal age, Gager."

"What do you read for, then, Honest John?"

"Fer my vocaberlary, mainly. Mine ain't what it ought to be, fer a man my age. So I read nothin' but books destitute of humor. They have the biggest and best vocaberlaries, I've found. Why, jest yesterday I found the finest word! 'Imponder'ble!' I expect to use it a lot."

"What verbal thunder!" exclaimed Gager, in an admiring voice. "But I have a yet grander one for your ears. Hear it now! 'Rodomontade'! What say you, Honest John?"

"I like the 'on' sound in it right well, Gager, as that is a fav'rite of mine. But the rest of it don't ring like 'imponder'ble' does. Thanks very much, Gager, but I allow I won't use it."

"You are wise, Honest John. Use no grand words but the ones that roll easily from the tongue. I hear that professors have died from lingual hernia."

"That's it, Gager. I never will use a word that puts a strain on me. If I can't say one easy I just leave it out of my vocaberlary. I know how to take care of myself, all right. I admit, Gager, I like words mainly for their fine sounds. And them I can't sound easy and fine I simply don't use."

"Your philosophy of verbal usage would desolate the print-proud, Honest John," said Gager. "But I must admire your simple test of a word's worth. I say with you: 'Damn the dictionary vocabulary of the print-proud—the dictionary in which half a million combina-

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tions of tone are defined as facts!' Here, Honest John, is a little word that sings for me. I give you 'ere.' Here is a word to hold like a little silver bell. A word to carry in your pocket. A word to shake a little tinkle into your ear. But the print-proud shun it, Honest John. They will have, instead, this dull, puffy, baggy, grunting word, 'before.' Hear this—'beef-hoar.' A preposterous word, Honest John, easily it takes a clown shape. Despite the definitions, I give you 'ere,' the bright, merry tinkler."

I was surprised to see a man who could tell stories and talk the history of the team hand tribe as well as Gager could get so excited over one measly little word, but he certainly was. He couldn't have argued more seriously if he had been a lawyer. And Honest John was serious, too. He scratched his bald head, frowned down under his specs, hemmed and hawed a couple of times, and then gave his opinion of 'ere.'

"I'd like to, Gager, but I don't know as I can co'ncide with you on that word, 'ere,' " he said solemnly. "I don't know as I could amalgamate it with my vocaberlary any better than I could 'rodymontade.' It don't boom quite to my likin'. I ain't very much fer tinklin', Gager. I 'low I'm gettin' too old fer it. Anyway, I don't read fer my vocaberlary altogether, Gager. I read a good deal fer information, too. I like to keep well posted."

"Get thee to a monastery, do!" Gager simply yelled it out, and he got up and began to tramp hard and heavy over the floor. He thumped himself on the chest and waved his hands. Paddy the Devil looked at him admiringly.

"He's goin' it again," said Paddy to me. And he certainly was.

"Get thee among the bachelors and spinsters of words,

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then, Honest John! He is a monk who looks for facts in words. The first uttered word was a song; the first printed one was a poem; the first reading man shouted the printed words aloud as he read. They are only monks who pore over solemn books in cellars, garrets and cells. What lights they would have us see on their melancholy brows! What authority they maintain in their scholars' gowns! But I say that light is a mask for vultures' beaks, and the gowns are cloaks for their claws. I can tell you, Honest John, of a lusty, laughing, brave, free singer of the Mississip' plains who erred in humility, submitted to the monks of the East, and permitted them to feed on his spirit until he sang no more. I can tell you of another, Honest John, a brave bard who was a toiler of fortune for a while. He knew the lookout's post, the prospector's trail. But he met a master with a prophet's beard under his beak, and the bard entered a cell. His song now is a whining monotone. Yet every singer of words has a shield at hand for defense against the print-proud professors: 'Imagination has nothing whatever to do with learning.' But the shield rusts. I give you a turn, Honest John."

"I'm maintainin' a distinct silence, Gager," snapped Honest John. "You inaugerated this discussion, and you can say its obsequies. You're excited, Gager, and I simply won't argy unless my emissary keeps hisself cam."

Gager stared hard at Honest John, swore a couple of times, and then he sat down in a rocking chair, and looked very glum and sour indeed. He stuck his hands into his pockets, stretched out his feet, and he stared down at them as he started talking again, this time in a very mournful voice.

"If I had only known how well off I was when I was a boy logger in the Minnesota woods, singing through the night as I rode the sleigh of logs and steered my

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team over the ice road; spiking pine butts in the white water of spring drives; jammer-loading the summer days in a wheel camp; knowing nothing and caring nothing but the joy of tough work and the roaring days of love, liquor and laughter in the logging towns! Oh, that winter in Minneapolis! Books were my sin, reading my ruin. I had thought of a shack and times with decent girls for the winter. But I was caught by Wallace the Goldfish, the greatest bunkhouse bard of the Minnesota timber. I wintered with him and his books. They made a wall and bars around me that I can never escape. Damn Wallace the Goldfish and the light he made to shine on the printed page! Damn all print and all print-proud men! They torment and weary the heart and flesh of the singer, they make a corpse of his song."

Gager got up then and went into the bedroom without another word. We heard him groan as he lay down on the bed.

"He's got his doldrums to-day," said Paddy the Devil. "When Gager talks about Wallace the Goldfish he always has his doldrums. Let's play a three-hand game of crib and let him sleep 'em off."

We pulled our chairs around the table and fell to playing over the cribboard. I liked the game, and the afternoon passed very comfortably, though I would feel sulky when I thought of being bossed around all winter by Honest John; and I felt kind of sorry for Gager. I vowed I'd leave books alone, if that was what they did to a man. I didn't have much ambition to be a story-teller, anyway; Gager's talk of the night before was what had taken my mind, and if I could work around to being a fighting team hand like Paddy the Devil, I wouldn't ask for anything better or higher.

After we had played crib for a couple of hours two more team hands drifted over from town. I soon

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learned they were pulling out for Cal that night with Gager and Paddy. They had a big package of T bone steaks and some bread, and Honest John went to work getting supper for the gang. He could certainly cook, and when he got his shiny dishes on the table, and a platter of steaks, and a big bowl of fried potatoes and onions, and a couple of apple pies, and a fat pot of coffee, it looked so much like a home table that I felt lonesome. Gager came out singing, with his doldrums all gone, and he kept everybody laughing as we cleaned up the table. I soon stopped laughing then, for I had to wash the dishes, and that was a job I had always despised. And it didn't make me feel any better to hear the team hands talking away about the trip to Cal. They talked on and on; and I was out of it, just like old Honest John.

"Good-bye, Jim. You'll do better for yourself and thank me for this some day," said Paddy the Devil, as we shook hands all around out in the yards that night.

I tried to say I would, but I couldn't bring myself to lie to him. I didn't say anything, but just shook hands.

"Fare thee well, little one." Gager stuck out his right hand to one side and threw his head back until the moonlight glittered in his black eyes. "Look every man in the eye, as a sword point darts into the scabbard! Keep your strength among women, and be not an insect in the webs of love! Labor with a hearty pride! Keep a fist always ready for battle! And shun books as you would the devil! I'll not forget you, little one."

Gager thumped himself on the chest with his fist and then shook hands. I told him I wouldn't forget him either. Just then the engine bell began to ring; and the four good old team hands strung out and swung underneath, each one taking a set of Pullman trucks. The passenger began to move. I stood stock-still and watched, and I got the lonesomest feeling as the lights

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disappeared around a curve. Honest John and I tramped back through the snow for his shack. I stopped and turned for a last look as I heard a whistle for a crossing. Honest John laid his hand on my shoulder.

"I know your resentsomeness," he said kindly. "I was a juv'nile feller once my own self. But you must look at it indom'tably, Appanoose. Look at it indom'tably all the time. The results might be imponder'ble. Yes, sir; real imponder'ble."

Well, I did get over my disappointment in a few days and began to enjoy Boise life a good deal. It was still quite a wild town in 1908. The main streets were paved, there was a six-story hotel, and a number of handsome houses, and there were a lot of regular Iowa farms, with big orchards and fancy stock, in the valley; but a lot of rough life went on in the city yet. Winter brought numbers of cow hands and sheep-herders in to loaf around the saloons and eat in the Chink restaurants and sleep in the old-time hotels. Many loggers and sawdust savages wintered up in Boise after the big mill up the river closed down. Hundreds of team hands and hard-rock men from the reclamation projects roared in the saloons and swaggered along the streets. There are mines all over Idaho, and the miners, of course, had the biggest tribe of working stiffs in town. The red-light district ran for four blocks down an alley just back of the main street; and it was a glaring, noisy place every night. But not rowdy. The Boise police were very strict. If a workingman got on too much liquor, he had to go to bed, or else lie down in the gutter. He had to sleep somewhere. He couldn't fight and raise hell generally like he could in such towns as Shoshone. Most of the saloons were in one-story, square-fronted buildings that had stood since the toughest frontier days. The workingmen's favorite was the Silver Leaf, which had a big space of sawdust-covered floor in front

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of the bar, all kinds of chairs and kegs, and a warm back room where you could sleep, if you wasn't a yegg or a john. The bartenders knew them, too.

Honest John was a grand cook, and he fed me so well that I hardly even minded washing dishes for him. He preached at me quite a bit; but I could stand it, for he did belong to the tribe; and while he used lots of big words, just like the school professors did, his somehow had a much wholesomer sound. And he let me smoke and chew and practice ripping out team hand cusswords without complaining. But I did have a time ever getting to the saloons, for Honest John *would* set his foot down on that. I didn't care for any saloon but the Silver Leaf, and whenever he left me alone, Honest John was usually gassing around there himself. Two or three times a week he would go to the library to get a new book and that was about the only time I would get to sneak into the Silver Leaf and enjoy a few minutes of listening to the workingmen and watching them perform.

But finally I got on to the idea of making him go to the library to look up the facts on some information I would invent for him; and then every day or so I would get a couple of hours in the Silver Leaf, while Honest John was digging into the cyclopedias. I'd work it this way:

Breakfast would be done, and I'd be washing the dishes, while Honest John read the paper. Every so often he'd let his pipe go out; then he'd put the paper down, light up, puff three or four times, look out the window at the snow, and sigh away: "Solid comfort! Satisfied!" Then he'd start reading again. At one of those times I'd spring some notion I'd been thinking up. For instance, one morning when he'd just sighed: "Solid comfort! Satisfied!" I made this remark in an offhand way:

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"I simply can't understand that feelin', Honest John. You know, I am half gypsy."

"You? Sho'! That's increjulous, Appanoose!"

"Yes, sir; my mother's folks was all gypsies; and everybody always said I was just like my mother's folks."

"What! And you yeller-headed! Who ever heard tell of a yeller-headed gypsy?"

When he got puzzled in an argument Honest John always forgot his big words. I saw now I had him coming my way.

"My mother's folks was a very rare kind of gypsy," I said, washing away unconcernedly on the dishes. "They belong in the Himalayer country and mighty few ever get over here. But in the Himalayer country the yeller-headed gypsies is claimed to be the greatest in the world. I understand they are greatly bragged up in all the cyclopedias. I'm right proud of belongin' to them, even though my gypsy blood does keep me from doin' better and makes me certain of bein' a pore rovin' team hand all the rest of my days."

I started singing a song then; and Honest John sat scratching his head and looking over his newspaper at me, his eyes shining curiously through his specs. By and by he got up, put on his mackinaw and hat, and said:

"I'm goin' to peramberlate to the Silver Leaf fer a inconsekent half hour or two. Don't let me detec' your presence there, or I'll lift it out most imponder'bly."

I waited awhile and then rambled uptown to the Silver Leaf, where I had a beer or two and listened to the tales of the team hands and their arguments with the miners. I knew well enough that Honest John would be busy for a good two hours, digging through the cyclopedias for the facts on the Himalayer gypsies. Then at noon he'd rage around and swear I'd never get him on such

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a plagued wild-goose chase again. But I always could. Honest John was that curious.

Still, he kept me away from the team hands quite a bit, and I don't know but what he might have reformed me considerably before spring if it hadn't been for a job that sprung up suddenly in the Horseshoe Bend country. I sort of lost my taste for the Silver Leaf; none of the team hands there could match Paddy the Devil or Gager; and then I took up with some of the laborers' sons around the town. They thought I was about it! The stories I told them! And after Christmas I got in with a girl who washed dishes in the railroaders' boarding house across the alley from Honest John's shack. Her name was Isis Dowell, and we had got pretty thick before I went to Horseshoe Bend.

Along in January we had one of the worst blizzards I had ever seen in the West. It roared down on the town early one morning. The hard wind shook our shack so it seemed the windows would be blown out of the frames. I woke up and listened for a while, arguing with myself as to whether it was too cold to go take a look at the storm. Finally I arranged it by pretending that I was back at the school and had to get up for the morning milking. This morning I would do what I had yearned and yearned so many times to do—run back to my blankets from the cold winter air. Out of them I rolled—b-r-r-r! the floor was the coldest of all the cold floors I'd ever felt! I galloped through the sitting room, knocked over a chair, and hauled open the door. That *was* a blizzard! It spit hard snow all over me out of the black night and the wind boomed itself inside, rattling the dishes in the cupboard and swishing Honest John's newspapers all over the room. I leaned hard against the door and shut out the storm. And was back in my warm bed in a second. Over in his room Honest John grunted a couple of times; then he sighed:

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"Solid comfort! Satisfied!" I was all crouched up, with my knees against my chin, and I said: "Solid comfort! Satisfied!" myself. The blankets felt *so* soft and warm. I wouldn't have been a milker then for the whole blamed dairy barn.

The blizzard lasted about twenty-four hours; then the sky cleared and the mercury dropped to thirty below. It was the hardest winter in years and made many fights among the old-timers, particularly among the old Indian fighters of the town. Some younger old-timer would say: "I never see the beat of it in all my time." Then one of the old Indian fighters would declare that the winter of sixty-nine was a worse one. Another old Indian fighter would insist that he was most likely referring to the winter of sixty-eight. Then they'd fall to it, yelling themselves hoarse and flushing themselves up with the strain of arguing which year the worst winter was; and finally the people around would have to hold them apart.

But in a week everybody stopped arguing about the weather. The Payette River in the Horseshoe Bend country got choked with ice, and the cakes jammed into the artificial channel which carried the water to the turbines of the biggest power plant in that part of the State. The water backed up the channel, it overflowed, then there was a tremendous washout. Boise was dark. A new channel must be dug. Contractors and walking bosses were dragged out of their winter quarters; mules and grading rigs were gathered up from everywhere; two dollars and a half a day and board were offered the team hands and the hard-rock men in the saloons. And for eight hours. The engineers planned to run three eight-hour shifts on the job.

Honest John got restless. And maybe I didn't. Oh, no.

One night he came to the shack with the news that he

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had hired out as "explosive engineer." I wormed it out of him finally that he meant that he had hired out as powder monkey at four dollars a day and board.

"I was not prevyus enough to get the com'sary account'ncy," he said. "But as explosive engineer I'll have a honer'ble position. Fer three weeks. My, my, what a ex'lent nooclus fer my next winter's afflu-ence. My pleasure is imponder'ble."

Honest John strutted back and forth in joy and pride, his wrinkled old face all a smile, his cheeks more like red apples than ever.

"I leave you to conduc' the 'stablishment." He waggled his finger at me, and squinted his eyes into a severe look which he threw over the tops of his specs.

I didn't say anything. But the next morning I was tramping alongside Snag Tooth Womack's wagons on the way to Horseshoe Bend. Honest John's outfit was far in the lead. He didn't find out I was along until the train went into camp for the night. He didn't use any big words, but just looked at me sadly and said I hadn't ought to have done this way, and what would Paddy the Devil think of him now? I felt kind of mean, but I wouldn't have missed this job for anything, certainly not just to please folks who wanted me to do better. If they wanted me to, they'd have to make me, and that was all there was to it. Here was a job that would be talked about a lot, and I intended to be in on it.

That was a tough night. We had a cold supper, though there was plenty of hot coffee, and made our beds in a rickety barn which a rancher had rented to Snag Tooth's section. It wasn't according to the team hand rules, but I had brought a bundle of blankets along; this was an emergency job, and the contractors couldn't be expected to furnish them. It was still twenty below zero, and my blankets wouldn't keep out the cold.

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The team hands all doubled up, but still we were cold in bed. We lay there and cussed winter work, and we cussed the scissor bills who were warm at home, and we cussed because we knew they were complaining worse than we were. And only because they had to burn coal oil lamps instead of electricity for a while.

"I'd burn coal ile mighty willin' if I could have steam heat and a hair matters and soft, oozy feather pillers," said Spot Evans, who was doubling up with me. "I'd burn it night and day and never complain. But not the scissor bills. It ain't in 'em. And will they thank us for gettin' the 'lectricity back agin? Not much they won't! It simply ain't in 'em, I tell you. The way they'll thank us is to say we're yeggs or johns when they see us on the streets. That's a scissor bill fer you, every time."

He went on grumbling and grumbling; and I agreed for quite a while; but pretty soon I got warm, and then drowsy; and the next thing I knew, I was opening my eyes in gray light. The blankets were all white with frost, and Spot Evans had a big patch of frost on his hair, where his head had stuck out of the blankets. I was chattering and shivering with the cold as I dressed, but Spot looked so funny when he sat up in bed, his face all screwed down in disgust, and half his hair turned white, that I simply roared and laughed. He threw back his hand to fetch me a lick and hit a nail that was sticking through the old barn wall; and then how he did bawl out the cusswords! It tickled me all over, and I never did get up feeling better. I loped down to the campfire, gulped down a quart of black coffee and some good hot slices of bacon, lit my old corncob, and then loped and jumped along for the wagons, where I helped harness the mules. They were terribly cold-shouldered and bit and bucked under the collars, but I felt so fine I didn't even kick them. You simply *can't* feel better

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than you do on some winter mornings, especially when you haven't worked for a long time.

I felt good all day, though it stayed clear and frosty and I had to keep walking on account of the cold. Most of the other men with the train were hiking, too; and I would lope up to one gang and listen to this one's talk for a while, and then fall back and listen to the talk of that one; and sometimes I would get by myself and sing a song or two, and think about Isis Dowell, who was about the sweetest little girl I had ever met. In the afternoon we got into the hill country, where we had to let the mules blow considerably on the upgrades, and had to roughlock the outside hind wheels of the wagons on the downgrades. The wheels next to the slope, I mean. You have to do just the opposite with a bobsled, to keep it from running up on your team; the inside runner, the one next to the bank, is what you have to roughlock on a bobsled. I don't know why the two rigs are contrary about roughlocking, but they are.

Well, along with the blowing and the roughlocking and the slow going over the icy roads, which got worse as we climbed higher into the snow and sage-covered hills, it was a long time after dark when we got into Horseshoe Bend.

Then we were all right, for the cookhouse was going good, and we had a rare hot supper, with sugar and canned milk for our coffee; and there were plenty of good places for us to sleep in. Snag Tooth's outfit was put in the dance hall, where straw had been heaped along the floor. There was a big heater in the hall, and soon we were comfortable, all set, and ready to go.

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VII

THE works were half a mile from the town. A thirty-foot cut some four hundred yards long was to be made through a hill for the new channel. The plant could still supply some power from an emergency steam rig, and the power company's linemen had strung lights on the hillside above the works, for the night shifts. Snag Tooth's outfit being the last one in, he got the graveyard shift, from midnight until eight in the morning. I didn't mind the idea of the graveyard shift; eight hours seemed like nothing to me; and I volunteered to work double shift, if needed, and thus make the wonderful wages of five dollars a day and board! But I wasn't allowed to.

Honest John was put on the graveyard shift as powder monkey, and he rode my other mule the first night we went out to the works. A gang of hard-rock men were drilling in the frozen ground; and Honest John's job was to load the holes with powder and blast a way to the soft dirt. It was terribly cold, and before long I got off and walked, leading the mules, and feeling so grouchy I wouldn't say a word. Coming out at midnight to team was worse than getting up at half past three to milk. Honest John was all bundled up and he stayed on his mule.

"Pity you couldn't 'tended to the disserstations of matoor'ty," he sâid. "Bet you're remorsin' about it now."

I was some, and that was a fact, but I wouldn't let on to Honest John. I tramped along in the procession of mules and team hands, not saying a word. The air was still, and the grinding of ice in the river and the

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scrunching footfalls in the snow and the rattle of trace chains sounded infernally loud. The noise made my nerves feel ragged. Even though I was full of ham and eggs, fried potatoes, doughnuts and coffee, and had my corncob going besides. I took a big chew of tobacco, and that soothed me a little.

When we got to the works Honest John slid off and stamped over to a fire, which was blazing under a tub of water. The other powder monkey was getting ready to thaw out dynamite. Honest John picked up a shovel, knocked the top off a box, and cut some of the sticks in half doing it. Then he set the tub off the fire and heaved the sticks into it by double handfuls. The best powder monkeys always appear reckless with powder, and Honest John evidently wanted to show that he was one of the best. He went to cutting up fuses and clinching caps with his teeth over the ends of the pieces. It made me shiver to see him. One of those caps could have blown his head ninety feet. I like dynamite just as I like rattlesnakes. I always did. I took my mules over to the farthest scraper I could see in the dim light that glimmered down from the electric lamps strung up along the hillside.

It was a hard job to get hitched up, for the mules wouldn't take the bits for minutes, though I blew the frost off with my breath a dozen times. And when they were hitched up they shotgunned for a long spell, warming their shoulders against the collars; then they went with a lunge. I was hostile, but sorry for them, too. The poor old Neds were not used to being hitched up to move dirt at this time of night.

I was fifth or sixth in line with my wheel-scraper; and I could hear the wheeler-loaders and the hook-skinner cussing the team hands ahead as they drove their wheelers in; and the team hands were cussing them back. I got it and gave it the same way in my turn. Everybody

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was cranky. It's not natural to move dirt at such a time of night, even in a case of emergency. The road to the dump was strewed with frozen lumps and I had to hold to the Johnson bar to keep the scraper from dumping. When a lump was too high for the pan the blade would catch, the cold-shouldered mules would lunge on, and often the wheeler would dump in spite of all you could do. I could hear team hands swearing all along the line from the darkness ahead. Then I heard the dump boss cussing the team hands, and they cussed back at him, louder than ever. I got over the dump in pretty fair style; but the mules made a fierce lunge when the empty scraper shoved down against their breeching, and I was jerked off my feet, skinning my knee on a lump of frozen muck. I certainly hated to come back to this work after lunch. But I did.

Then I learned the thing that is the strangest about graveyard shifts everywhere, the thing that makes them different from the other two kinds. On the graveyard you are always your tiredest and grouchiest when you first go to work. Most times you think you simply can't live and go on working. But you usually can. Then after lunch you get to feeling better and more rested every hour; and at eight o'clock in the morning you are almost sorry you have to quit work, you are feeling so much better. It is the livest time of the graveyard shift.

Well, the other team hands and the loaders and the dump boss and the mules all seemed to feel this way, too; and by seven in the morning we were all working together in pretty good style. I had been singing for the last half hour and I kept it up, though I was hoarse from so much cussing in the fore part of the night. About half past seven I thought I'd take a final smoke; I pulled the glove from my right hand; and, lo and behold, my forefinger was frozen solid! It was so hard

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it scared me to feel it, and it was so white it scared me to look at it. At first I couldn't think it was frozen, for I hadn't felt any cold in it; and then I got a wild, panicky idea that almost knocked me over. I remember a man with ossified feet that I had seen in a circus once; and the notion came to me that I had started to ossify like him, only in my hand, and that a slow death was staring me in the face. But Snag Tooth came up and bawled: "Hell, it's only froze; what's the matter of you? Shake them old Neds around here and keep the dirt a-movin'; stick your mit in the snow ever' once in a while, and it'll thaw out in a hour or so."

I did like he told me; but when it thawed it hurt so bad all day I couldn't sleep. And the next shift I was the grouchiest I had been in all my born days. That finger was a terrible bother to me for about three months, along with the skin and the nail coming off, and it being so cursed tender all the time. But it was better than ossifying, I had to admit.

I got an extra pair of wool gloves and kept a close watch on my fingers after that. And I got more used to the graveyard shift and had a pretty fair time of it until five days before the job was done. Then the real bad luck happened.

That night I had unhitched for lunch and was waiting for Honest John to light his fuses. There had been no shooting of frost for several days now; but a limestone ledge had been struck in the lower end of the cut, and the powder monkeys were kept at work on it. Honest John would light his fuses at lunch time, trot down to where I was waiting, mount my off mule, and we'd lope out of danger. Usually we were a third of the way to the cookhouse before the blasts roared. Now I was holding the impatient mules, cussing them once in a while, thinking of some fool thing or another, waiting for Honest John.

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Thinking about something or other. Wishing I was in bed. Nursing my sore finger. Listening to the ice scrunch in the river. Looking at Honest John bending over in the light that spread down from the strings of globes over the cut. Turning to swear again at the off mule. Then a big noise, a cracking roar, stars flashing around in circles; and I went down with all the breath knocked out of me. The mules snorted and jerked loose. A rock banged on the frozen earth beside me. And another. I tried to yell; then I felt like someone had taken me by the feet, turned me upside down, and was pounding my head on the hard, frozen ground. Everything went swimming.

Someone was shaking me and yelling: "Didjah get hit? Didjah get hit?" I came to pretty suddenly then, and I felt miserably cold all over, and my head seemed like it was splitting. "Don't I look like it?" I tried to say, but the words wouldn't come very loud. I looked up the cut, and it was dark up there; it was dark all around, and in the dark I could only see the shine of the team hand's excited eyes; and then they started dancing back and forth in front of me, and I had to fight to keep my senses. "You're all bloody. You seem hurt. You musta got hit, I guess," I heard him say. Then he was boosting me on a mule; and as I was jolted along I came more to myself.

I had to hang to the hames with both hands, for I felt terribly dizzy and was sick at the stomach. The team hand rode alongside, holding to my arm, and saying things in an excited voice, which I couldn't understand. I heard him mention Honest John several times, but I felt too sick to pay attention. And I didn't know much until late the next day, when I woke up with my head feeling about ten times too big for me.

I was in a room in the town's small hotel and Spot Evans and Nig Lynch were with me. Spot gave me a

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big drink of rotten whisky and I felt better right away. Spot had the name of being crooked at cards and he was a good deal of a crank, but he wasn't a bad team hand, at that. He told me all he knew about what had happened.

"Some way Honest John set off a box of caps and half a box of giant," he said. "That's all we know. All we could find was little pieces of him. That's the way we go: blowed to hell, or tromped by a mule, or smashed under a upset dump wagon, or froze or cut up on the road, or give the black bottle in some county hospittle. And much the scissor bills cares, as long as they get their railroads built and their ditches dug and have their 'lectricity 'stead of coal ile."

"That's it exactly," said Nig Lynch. "You told it better'n I could, Spot Evans."

Then Spot went on to tell me that I had been struck by a rock in the chest, and that another had made a big gash in my scalp. One of the engineers who knew how to doctor had sewn it up for me.

"You're carryin' eight stitches, Appanoose," said Spot. "When Paddy the Devil got blowed up a year ago in Texas he had just six."

Spot knew the best thing to say to me, even if he was a crank.

The next day I was hauled down to Boise in the stage and the power-company people put me in the hospital. But I begged out in two days, for it was a tiresome and sickening place. It made me think all the time of poor old Honest John. The company paid up to the minute, though I had lost several days, so I had as big a stake as any of the team hands. It was lucky for me, as my other stake had been in Honest John's money belt and had been blown to nothing along with him. That company certainly was white.

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VIII

"WHAT would *you* think, Isis, if I was to settle down, like I ought to?"

"You surely know. Haven't I told you that I prayed and prayed about you, after you'd gone out hoboin' again?"

"That wasn't hoboin', Isis; it was just to work on a job that would get the town electricity."

"It must have been wrong, anyhow. 'Cause punishment was brought down on your head."

"Do you think it was punishment brought down? I honestly can't see why it should have been. Seems just like an accident that happened."

"No, it was more like one of the sudden and ter'ble vis'tations the Methodist minister tells about as always bein' punishments. I feared something like it, Jimmie. That's why I prayed."

"You really think so, do you? Well, Isis, I guess you ought to know, for I can't imagine a girl bein' more religious than you are; but just the same, I can't quite fathom it."

"That's because you ain't had the gift of grace. But you must take warnin' now. You settle down and be good and try to live a Chrischun life, and you'll soon have grace, I just know it! Oh, I can just see you, Jimmie! Standin' up in the crowded church, tellin' your awful hoboin' past, and givin' testimony in the proudest, manliest way. You'll have on a blue suit and a white collar, and look so strong and mighty in your faith. And I can hear the people whisperin': 'That's Jimmie Turner; there's not a finer young man, or a more

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religious young man, in the whole Boise Valley.' And you might get called to preach! Oh, I can just see you in the pulpit! You'd look so big and strong, and you could shout out with such a rich, rollin' voice—I can just hear you, Jimmie!"

And Isis Dowell looked over my head with that soft, far-away, religious look in her dark brown eyes, and the frosty air was making a deep pink bloom in her cheeks, and I thought of all the people I had heard said were saints; but here was the first one I had ever seen who really looked it. She appeared just heavenly, the very picture of an angel, in spite of the rough old coat she was wearing.

"You certainly make me want to be good, Isis," I said. "But I doubt if I can."

"If you would just come to prayer meetin' or Sunday school once!"

"I ain't got no Sunday clothes, and no money to spare to buy any."

"You could come to prayer meetin' and slip into a back seat, anyway. Then maybe Mr. Dariel or one of the other stewards would help you get a decent job. Jimmie, I want you to so much. I wish you'd come tonight."

"I will, maybe."

"Promise."

"All right."

"I can just see you—doin' so fine. Well, I must get back to my dishes now. So long. You'll sure be at prayer meetin'?"

"Yep. So long, Isis."

We had been talking across the alley fence. She smiled the sweetest, angelic smile and skipped through the snow over the alley road, through a rickety gate, and up the back steps of the railroad boarding house. At the kitchen door she turned, smiled at me again, and

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then the door banged behind her. And I was in for a prayer meeting.

Isis Dowell was just seventeen. She was an orphan and lived with her second cousin, a brakeman's wife, a sanctified Methodist, but a mighty mean woman. There were five children in the family, and Isis had washed dishes in the boarding house since she was fourteen. Going to her work, she had to come down the alley behind Honest John's shack. Usually she'd run back and forth three or four times a day. I had come back to the shack after I got out of the hospital, for the rent was paid on it until March, and there was quite a bit of grub stored in the kitchen. It was lonesome and mournful there for me now; but still I stayed around it more than I did the Silver Leaf; and this was on account of Isis Dowell.

I got acquainted with her soon after I went to live with Honest John. I liked her looks from the start. She was a slim girl, but not at all gangling. She had a healthy swing when she walked along that was fine to watch, for she was strong, and work hadn't seemed to have hurt her a particle. She was usually wearing an old coat of her second cousin's, and her shape didn't show in it very good; but when she wasn't wearing a hat her face and hair looked very pretty. She had the biggest brown eyes, all silky-lashed, and how they would sparkle on winter mornings! But even when it was cold her cheeks only shone a soft, delicate pink, for they were nothing like the usual plump, apple-red kinds on the ranch girls I used to know. Her nose was slender-shaped, kind of intelligent-looking, like a schoolma'am's; and her mouth was soft and pretty, though her lips were rather thin sometimes. But she would get the most curious expressions around her mouth, whenever she had that far-away, angelic gaze; her lips would curve into the faintest smiles then, scarcely showing her white teeth,

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and her brown eyes would melt into the softest, dreamiest look, which would seem to pull my heart right up into my throat, making me feel like I did when I was seven years old in Iowa and got converted at a Methodist revival.

The first time I saw Isis was on a clear winter morning. She wasn't wearing a hat then, and her hair had reddish gleams in the sparkling sunlight. Of course I didn't know yet how religious she was; and I got to thinking of how I had dreamed about Gager's strawberry roan mule devil that night in the Shoshone depot; and I thought maybe I had a sick mind, too, and that I needed a red-headed woman to cure it. That was what made me get acquainted with Isis. She got so she would say: "Hello; yes, it's pretty cold to-day," as she came along the alley; and after ten days or so she would stop and talk to me.

Then I found out how religious she was, for I started bragging to her about my hobo experiences, and she didn't take them at all like the city laborers' sons did. Instead, she said I was mired to my neck in wickedness, and that if I kept on I'd have a sudden and terrible visitation of punishment. She declared she could see me being a fine and noble young man and that it was her duty to make me seek salvation. Isis was such an angel about it that I let her try. Her way was to get that sweet, far-away expression on her face and see pictures of what I might be after I was saved and then tell me about them. I kind of liked it, for she would always make me appear big and strong and noble. Sometimes I'd be singing bass in the church choir, sometimes I'd be going away missionarying, with a big crowd giving me a send-off at the depot, and again I'd be braving death by carrying the Word out to the hobos. That girl certainly had the rarest and the most beautiful imagination you could think of. I never once felt up to

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her pictures, but she kept getting more and more earnest about them, and I didn't discourage her any more than I could help. And one night I coaxed her into slipping out and going for a walk with me.

Abby, the second cousin, was waiting for us when we got back. She raised Ned with Isis; called her an ungrateful hussy and worse things; and Isis started to cry, and I got mad and told the second cousin she was nothing but an old cantankerous muley that needed the rope. Then I got it.

"You worthless young scalawag! I'll teach you to say sech things to me!" she screamed, shaking her bony finger under my nose and coming out on the porch so fast that I backed down the steps. "I'll teach you!" She looked skinnier than ever when she got into the moonlight, a gray shawl hanging in big wrinkles from her shoulders, her eyes having a hard shine through her specs, the little knot of black hair on top of her head quivering while she talked. "I'll teach you! You're a runaway boy, ain't you, heh? A worthless scalawag who his folks is shorely worryin' themselves sick about! You! Bein' a dirty tramp! Shame on yourself!"

How she did go on, raving and ranting like the old bag of mischief she was, until I stuck my fingers in my ears and ran home to the shack. In the morning she got after Honest John, threatened us with the police, and really had me pretty badly scared. But I got control of myself and told her in an offhand way that my folks in Florida were well to do and that they'd make it hot for her if she had me put in jail.

"Your folks where?" she asked very sharply.

"Florida, I said. Your head ain't in no sack, is it?" She certainly could make me want to say things to her!

"You don't talk like Florida to me."

"My folks is wealthy Ioway miners and ain't lived there long."

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"*Ioway* miners, you say?"

"Coal-miners, of course. I don't suppose you've heard of anything comin' from Ioway but corn and hogs."

"I s'pose your folks lives in one of the finest and biggest towns in Florida now."

"Yes, ma'am; they do."

"What town?"

I had to think like sixty and answer quick.

"Savannah!" I snapped at her.

The second cousin hustled right off, and I knew that she would immediately write to Savannah, Florida, about me. But I wasn't worried. For one thing, I knew Savannah, Florida, was a long way from Idaho; for another, I didn't have any folks anywhere that I knew of, except my Idaho uncle. She couldn't cause me any trouble unless some of the Turners in Savannah, Florida, had a runaway boy named Jimmie, and that wasn't likely.

But it was a muss, and I was sorry on Isis' account. The second cousin and her husband were both mean to Isis, and she got fits from them for going out walking with me. It didn't do her any good to tell them she was only trying to save a soul; they simply wouldn't believe her and made life so miserable for her that she wouldn't hardly look at me for three or four days when she was going to work. Then the Horseshoe Bend job came up; and this muss was one of the reasons why I went out, though Isis didn't want me to. I'd just made trouble for her, and I was a born hobo and she a born angel. It wasn't right.

But when I came back I was so mournful and lonesome that I began to take life much more seriously and thought very often about doing better on my own account, without any urging. I told Isis this the first time I saw her again, though I still felt in my soul that the

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idea was unnatural to me, and no real use. She went to talking more enthusiastically than ever she had and was sympathetic as an angel about my hurt head. I warned her she'd better not talk to me; but Isis said she knew her duty and Abby could go to thunder. She said it so fiercely I was a little surprised. But not much, for I knew from experience how strongly the Methodist religion worked.

Then one morning we had this serious and earnest talk. I felt so sober all day that I almost took to reading one of Honest John's books, but I remembered Gager's warnings, and felt he knew what he was talking about, and left it alone. I recollected some of the old hymns and sang them around while I was getting my supper and washing the dishes and brushing up my mackinaw and rubbing some grease spots out of my overalls. By prayer-meeting time I was feeling really devout and humble.

I went to the church fairly early and hung around outside, waiting for Isis and her cousin to show up. I intended to go in behind them and get a seat as close to her as I could, without making myself conspicuous. But when Isis came she was alone.

"Dan's train ain't in yet, so Abby couldn't come," she said. "I'm just awfully glad to see you here, Jimmie. I hope you won't miss another meetin' now, or Sunday school either. I can just see you—one of the finest young men in the church!"

She was so pretty in her Sunday coat, which was brown and had two rows of big, slick buttons on it and in the brown velvet cap which was perked over on one side of her head, that I could only stand and look at her. It was a poor light over the church door, and not very bright there on the steps, but there seemed to be a regular gold shine all around Isis.

"You better go ahead," was all I could stammer out.

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"You won't want to sit with me, and me in my overalls."

"I won't care a bit."

There were several Methodists coming up the steps now, and they were all looking at me curiously; so I went on in and took a seat in the back, and Isis came along and sat down beside me. It was pretty dark where we were, as the whole church seemed poorly lighted. The Methodists were coming in pretty fast now. I crouched down in my seat as inconspicuously as I could; but I felt my face flushing up all the same, and I couldn't say a word. Pretty soon the warmest thrill just circled and circled around me, and I discovered that I was holding Isis' hand! I looked at her and saw her soft, far-off gaze.

"What are you dreamin' about now?" I whispered.

"Something fine. Hush."

And I did. I would have done anything she said right then; I felt so meek and humble I'd have gone right to the mourners' bench if she had asked me; and I felt so glorious I'd have shouted if she had asked me to do that. I was never so affected by a girl in all my born days; and I've never been since. There is no time like the first one.

The yellow ceiling, so high and dark, began to shine, the colors of the windows just sparkled, the varnished benches gleamed bright, and the Methodists around looked like the handsomest and kindest men and women I had ever seen. Suddenly everything darkened down again. Isis had let go my hand. She was leaning her shoulder against mine and looking and pointing in front of my nose.

"There's Frank Dariel," she whispered. "All the girls are crazy about him. Stuck on him, I mean. I like him too, but only for the fine things I can imagine him doin'."

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I saw a curly-headed, pale-faced young fellow of about twenty sitting between a bald-headed old man and a plump little old lady in black who was looking at the young fellow very proudly. He was handsome all right, but appeared stuck-up. I was glad to hear Isis say *she* wasn't crazy about him, like the other girls were, for he didn't appear to be much of a man.

But this Frank Dariel certainly did star in the prayer meeting. He made a long prayer in a feeling tenor voice, and you could always hear this voice soaring up in the singing. And when he testified he more than put it on about how he had been the wickedest kind of a boy since he was fifteen, going to dances as often as twice a week, and even attending the opera house on prayer-meeting nights. But he had put that wickedness behind him, he said, and he was proud to feel sure of salvation now. He was proud to feel this, but still he would bear a burden of sorrow for his youthful wickedness all his days, he declared. Let other young people take warning. If *that* was what he called wickedness, I thought, what was the name for the things I'd done? I'd never dare to tell them in prayer meeting, even if I was to get converted again.

Frank certainly looked pure and handsome while he was making his talk; all the girls in the church were staring at him, and his folks were looking up at him with proud smiles; and he seemed to know it, the way he kept rolling his eyes around, and tossing the curls back from his forehead, and fussing with his blue bow tie.

"Doesn't he look poetic?" whispered Isis. "Wouldn't he make a wonderful minister?—not fat and homely, like so many of them are. I can just see him preachin' a whole congregation into tears."

I didn't whisper anything back. I somehow couldn't like this young fellow very much. And I liked him less when he came around after the meeting was over and

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talked to Isis like he might be sweet on her, though I could see he felt much more high-toned than she was. I got an itching to try my muscle on him and didn't feel nearly so meek and humble as when I first went in.

Isis seemed to realize this and she was sweeter and kinder to me than she had ever been as we walked home, letting me hold her hand after we came to the dark street that led down to the railroad yards. And before I left her in front of Abby's house, she put her hand on my arm and said:

"I honestly think you could look as fine and do as fine as Frank Dariel, in your own way, Jimmie, if you would just try. I can see you bein' so much differ'nt to what you are now. I wish I could coax you to get a decent job and try to do better for yourself. You could be as good as anybody, if you wanted to. I know it! I can just see you!"

"Isis," I said very earnestly, "I'll look for a decent job to-morrow."

And then she squeezed my hand and we said good night and I simply danced along through the snow on my way to the shack, saying over and over to myself:

"I'll be worthy of her, Isis, my queen. Oh, my queen, I'll be worthy of her. I shall become a worthy man, oh, Isis."

Well, I had no idea of what was coming. You never do. The next morning I was up early, feeling as devout and humble as ever, and determined to land a decent job before the day was out. There were three big creameries in town, and I naturally went to them first, as butter-making was the only good and decent job I'd had any experience with. But Boise seemed to be overrun with butter-makers just then, and I couldn't even get a job washing milk bottles. However, the Sunnydale Creamery boss said he liked my looks, and he promised me first chance at any job I could handle.

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"You call around every day or so," he said, "and I'll let you know if anything turns up."

His name was Mr. Riner. He was a bald-headed, fat, good-natured looking old creamery man, and I thought I might get along with him, in spite of the fact that I had lost all my taste for slopping over wet cement floors, wrassling tin cans of sour cream and buttermilk around, and working and molding butter. I thanked Mr. Riner very politely and he smiled in the friendliest way as I left.

I came around to see him every day, and we got to having very friendly talks, but two weeks had gone by, it was after the first of March, and I was out of the shack, with only a few dollars of my Horseshoe Bend stake left, before he gave me a look at a job.

"Jason needs a milker," said Mr. Riner, "and I've a mind to try you on him. Yes, sir, I've a mind. Maybe he'll holler because you're so young; but you're big and strong, and I'm trustin' you to milk like you say. Anyhow, you go out and try; and when I have an openin' in the creamery you can take it, if you do good at handlin' the milkin'."

Mr. Riner went on to tell that Jason Yardley was the foreman of his ranch, and needed a milker for the twelve Jerseys, now that it was time to begin preparations for the spring plowing and seeding. I'd have to milk the cows, take care of the bull and the hogs and calves, clean the barns, and feed the horses. The wages were thirty-five dollars a month and board. I thought of the good old team hands, and I sighed. But I thought more of Isis, and I decided to take the job. In another year I might be a respectable butter-maker and a good, religious young man, just like she had dreamed. Isis was worth any sacrifice, and I'd tackle it for her sake. And Paddy the Devil would very likely be glad about it, if he should come to Boise and see me. And so would Honest John,

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if he was here, poor old soul. I cheered up all I could over the idea.

"I'll take the job. And thank you very, very much, Mr. Riner."

"All right. You come around to-morrow 'bout one o'clock."

I ate supper in a restaurant; and then, as it was prayer-meeting night, I went over to the Methodist church. I was eager as all get out to tell Isis the good news. I hung around the steps until I saw her coming with the second cousin. As they were going inside I slipped up behind and touched Isis on the arm. When she turned I saw such a hurt look in her eyes that I almost forgot what I had to tell her.

"Oh, Jimmie, why did you tell such a lie and make more trouble for yourself?" she said, after the second cousin had disappeared.

"What lie?" I asked, completely flabbergasted.

"About Savannah, Florida. Abby got her letter back to-day, and she is mad as a wet hen because you made a fool of her, makin' her think Savannah was in Florida."

"Why, ain't it?" was all I could gasp out, I was so surprised.

"You know perfectly well it's in Georgia. Mrs. Ginn and all the other neighbors are laughin' at her, and she'll never forgive you as long as you live, I bet."

"Don't you be mad at me though, Isis," I said, very humbly. "I was wicked then, I admit. But I'm not now. Listen, I'm goin' out to a real decent job to-morrow and get an honest start. Won't you slip out after you get home and let me tell you 'bout it?"

"Well——"

"Please. If you don't, I won't have the heart to go ahead."

"I will then. But I wish you hadn't lied."

Here Abby came out and jerked Isis inside, and the

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look that second cousin gave me would have poisoned a spider. I sneaked into a dark corner of the church, and I didn't dare to look at her, or at Isis either, all through prayer meeting.

I had a shock coming, for when the services were over, here came Frank Dariel out into the aisle in front of Abby and Isis; and that second cousin must have tortured herself to make such a smile as she did for him. And he up and took her on his left arm and Isis on his right arm and walked every step of the way home with them. I knew it, because I was following. And I wasn't in a very good humor when Isis slipped out to meet me, about a half an hour after she got home.

"I couldn't help it if he walked home with us," she said. "And why should I want to? All the girls are crazy about him. But I don't care anything about that. I just like to imagine him bein' a minister and preachin' splendidly, like a minister should."

"You don't like him better'n me, do you, Isis?"

"I like you both."

"I wish you'd say you liked me better than him or any other young fellow. If you don't, I won't have the heart to go out and work up to a decent, respectable job. I wish you'd say it and mean it."

She said to tell her about the job first, and I did. Well, I'd talked with her a lot about Mr. Riner and given her quite a grand opinion of him and the chances for a young fellow in his creamery, and Isis became very enthusiastic as I talked on now.

"I do like you a lot, Jimmie," she said at last. "I do honestly believe I like you better than Frank, or anybody. I can imagine you doin' lots of wonderful things."

Then she looked up at me very strangely for a while, without saying anything, the moonlight shining down in her eyes, which had never looked more dreamy and sweet and angelic than they did now. She put her

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hands up on my shoulders and I thought she was surely going to say something wonderfully religious to encourage me, and I felt as solemn and devout as I could feel; but she just said, very, very softly:

"You have such powerful shoulders, Jimmie. I'd never seemed to notice them so much before. But they are. Powerful and strong. You could do such wonderful things."

Well, I just thrilled all over. I was surprised and I felt myself flushing up and I didn't know what to say. I looked down at her and saw how soft and warm her throat looked where her coat collar closed around it, and how sweetly her lips were parted, and what a glowing, dreamy look she had in her eyes, and I thought for a minute I wanted to kiss her, but she looked simply too lovely and sacred. I just stood there, and by and by she dropped her hands from my shoulders and sort of shivered and said she was cold now. I don't remember whether we shook hands or not. All of a sudden I noticed I was alone; and, feeling as proud and noble and strong as I had ever felt in all my born days, I stood and watched her window until the light went out.

I didn't know it then, but such a time only comes about once in your life.

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IX

It was a jolty ten-mile ride to the Riner Ranch; for the road still had considerable frost in it, though the weather had been moderating for some time. I sat by Jason Yardley, Riner's Arkansas foreman, on the high spring seat of a lumber wagon. A fat span of Percherons was trundling us along. Their wide backs made them look as big as elephants to me, for I had been used to mules a long time now. Even the biggest mules are pretty narrow, compared to average Percherons. These slick, dappled gray fellows had nobly roached manes; and they seemed to know it, keeping their necks arched, and throwing their heads down every once in a while and chomping their bits and snorting against their knees. They had big nickel knobs on their hames and little nickel knobs all over their backbands and headstalls, and their spreaders were made of white and blue rings strapped together. Their harness was made of heavy leather and was well oiled, and they were *so* fat and slick! For ten minutes at a stretch I'd watch their chunky old hips waggling along. Then Jason would say: "How much you 'low the nigh un weighs?" puckering up his leathery, wrinkled face and squinting at me from under the brim of his floppy hat; which was black once, but brown with sweat stains around the band and gray with dirt on the brim and crown now. I'd reckon "about sixteen-fifty." "Not so fur off. Seventeen hun'erd, 'thout the harness." Then I had to guess the weight of the off one; and after that we got to talking about mules, which were plentiful in Arkansas; and then we got around to cows.

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When I had told Jason all I knew about cows he opined I was a pretty smart lad; and if I could milk them as good as I talked about them, he said, we'd get along fine on the ranch. He could milk the scrub cows of Arkansas well enough, said Jason, for you could bang one with a stool for kicking, and her nerves weren't hurt any; but it was still a problem for him to handle these high-strung Jerseys. I got to liking Jason fine; he didn't quiz me about my history; and he treated me like a man, especially after I had convinced him that I knew all there was to know about Jerseys.

So we talked and laughed as the lumber wagon bounced along after the slick, fat horses, and had a grand time of it. We chewed most of the time, as Jason wasn't much for smoking, and I wanted to keep him company in his own way. We'd each store up a good load of juice and then try to beat each other shooting at a sage-brush or something else along the road. Jason was much the best at this game; but I didn't mind; it wasn't such a great game, anyhow, and, besides, I was expecting to give up tobacco for Isis' sake whenever I got my decent, respectable job in town.

The warmth of a Chinook wind drifted down out of the cloudy sky, and it seemed like the first smell of spring was beginning to creep up through the snow. I could see shining little drops trickling off the sagebrushes, and the gray leaves had a clean look when the snow had dripped away from them; and the stringy bark of the brush, so dry and dead-looking most of the time, was dark with moisture now, appearing fresh and alive.

The road wound around the base of the foothills, and over in the valley the fields around the red barns and white houses were still covered with snow; but it didn't *appear* like winter snow to-day; I could *see* the tiny sprouts of wheat and alfalfa working up through the black, wet earth underneath; and I could imagine that

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snow vanishing mighty soon, and the black fields all sprinkled with green and steaming under the sun. Right now I wouldn't have been surprised to have heard a robin chirping any minute. I did feel so good and glorious and gay, so chock-full of songs and brightness inside that I could hardly hold myself down sometimes; riding along the foothill road, watching the fat Percherons waggle their way up one pitch and down another, chewing with Jason, dreaming about Isis and all I was going to do for her sake, not missing the team hands and their life so very much, all the time singing a song inside myself about the feeling of spring waking up in the soil and the air and the drowsy clouds. That certainly was a ride to remember.

We got to the Riner ranch about four o'clock. An orchard grew on a slope between the main road and the house. We drove down through the apple trees; then out of them; and there were the ranch buildings, and fields beyond, and then rows of cottonwoods and willows along the river. The tops of these trees didn't make the skyline, for the snowy hills on the other side of the valley loomed very high. But I wasn't much interested in the trees or the fields or even in the ranch house, where Jason hauled up. It was a tall, shambly-looking two-story house, with an L on it for the kitchen. The white paint was scaling off and it looked like the farmhouses I was used to in Iowa when I was a boy.

My main interest was in the barn, for I had a good idea of what my job was, and I knew I'd spend most of my time there. The barn was new-painted in red; it had an enormous mow; there were two big ventilators in the roof, and Jason said the cow section had cement floors and gutters. The Jerseys were gazing at us through the bars of the big barnlot, throwing their heads around now and then to lick their shoulders, which showed they were contented and well fed and had little

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but itching to worry them. A two-year-old bull grumbled at us from a stout pen. He was a peevish animal, just like most bulls; of course they can't understand why they must be shut off from female society, and they brood about it and get cross and mean. Anyway, the layout looked pretty good to me.

Jason said for me to go on in and have the old woman show me my room, and then he would help me with my first milking. The "old woman" was a fat young one really, who laughed and talked with the most amusing Arkansas drawl and carried a google-eyed baby around, while two bigger ones hung to her skirt like they were trying to hide from me. They knew well enough I wouldn't hurt them, but they were bashful. Some kids are funny that way. Mrs. Yardley showed me a nice room upstairs and told me to put my things away and make myself comfortable; laughing with her mouth and black eyes and red cheeks all the while. I thought at first she was laughing because all my things were some toilet articles, a suit of underclothes and a towel wrapped up in a newspaper; but I soon learned that she laughed most of the time, not at anything in particular, but because she was so healthy and good-natured she enjoyed life and didn't care who knowed it. Jason wasn't quite so healthy, and I became sure that the cause of the "poorliness" he sometimes complained of was his forgetting his juice very often and swallowing it. That causes stomach trouble nearly every time. But Jason declared most of his people in Arkansas were poorly, so maybe it was natural with him. The three babies were healthy, like their mother, but only one laughed so much. That was the youngest one, and he certainly was cute. I got so I liked to hold him, but never for too long at a time.

Well, I pulled off my good overalls from over my old ones and then went down to the kitchen for the milk buckets and cans. I trundled them in a wheelbarrow

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down a board walk. Mrs. Yardley called after me: "Be in for supper at seven, or y'all will go to bed hongry!" Then she laughed.

Jason had Maud and Barney, the two horses, put up by this time, and together we got the Jerseys into the stanchions. We gave each one a good feed of mill run, and then fell to work. I tackled the first cow with all my power, for I had been talking pretty big to Jason about milking, and now I had to prove that I could do it as well as talk it.

It was much harder. I couldn't have had a worse cow to start on; her name was Pansy, and she was a short-teated heifer. Right away I discovered what a bother my frozen finger was going to be, for it was peeling off now and was mighty tender. I had learned thumb-and-finger milking, and I started that way now, as I told Jason it was the only scientific system, and I tried to keep my hands dry, as a good juicer always does. But the milk would get on my hands from these short teats, and it was awkward going for my right hand, as I had to use my middle finger, and my hand would slip off nearly every pull. Jason had finished his first cow before I was done with two teats, and already my hands were aching miserably. Then I gritted my teeth, tackled the other two teats in old-fashioned farmer style, and sweated them dry with less aches and worry. Milking is mainly work, after all; you can put only so much science into the job.

Well, I milked five cows to Jason's seven and only had one bucket of milk kicked over. Jason said I had done fine, considering that I was strange to the cows and had a bad finger besides. But I was certainly tired, and it felt like hot needles were sticking into the backs of my hands. I never talked much scientific milking while we fed down the alfalfa and separated the milk and wheeled the skimmed milk to the hogs and calves. And

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while I ate supper, all I did was to eat and listen to Mrs. Yardley laugh. How good that meal did taste! There was cornbread, bacon and eggs, potatoes fried in fresh bacon grease, home-made hominy, cabbage and hot mince pie. Then there was butter fresh from the churn, and two kinds of jelly, and a big glass of pear preserves. The preserves were about the best I had ever tasted. They were plump, mellow and sirupy, and they just mixed beautifully with the rich, crumbly cornbread and sweet butter. I must have eaten four chunks of the cornbread with them, after I had finished the heavy victuals. I thought I couldn't hold any pie, but to my surprise I got away with two quarters, while Mrs. Yardley simply rocked and laughed. When farm cooking is good there is no better anywhere. And Mrs. Yardley's was very fine.

After supper I had a smoke and got to feeling very rested again. So I got some pasteboards and set out to make some record sheets for the cows, as I had told Jason I should do. But he got his fiddle going and I only made one. It was too pleasant to sit in the rocker and listen to his old-time tunes and watch the blue smoke curl up from my old corncob, seeing it make pictures of the little woman for whose sake I was doing better and making a worthy man of myself. By and by it seemed she had come into the room, and that soft, religious light of her eyes shone down at me through a kind of silvery mist. I could not move, but just sat and looked and looked, getting a more sacred feeling all the time. And then I heard a loud ringing near my ear, and I jumped out of my dream to see Mrs. Yardley holding an alarm clock close to my head and laughing like everything.

"Take this and git to bed," she said. "Y'all know you got to git up at four in the mawnin'?"

I stumbled up to bed feeling mighty cranky; but when I was in the blankets I felt so good I just wanted to stay

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awake and keep feeling that way. I couldn't do it, though. I never could. In less than a minute I was dead to the world.

From then on, it was mostly hard work for me at the Riner ranch. Up at four; trundle the milk bucket and cans out through the dark, shivering all over from the frost, for it was mostly clear weather now, my tender finger aching like sixty from the cold; feed mill run to the twelve Jerseys and milk them in the lantern light; separate the milk; then a breakfast of mush, bacon and eggs, hot cakes, sweet butter and pear preserves; feed the cows, calves and hogs; clean out the barn and do other chores until noon. After dinner I would generally snooze a couple of hours, then begin the evening work. But sometimes I would go out and talk with Jason and help him fix fence, which was the work he was doing until the ground got dry enough for plowing. The snow melted fast in the first week, and, before long, tiny blades of grass were peeping out of big black patches of earth down in the pastures. I imagined I could feel the soil stirring as I walked over it, and I enjoyed the tickling smells which the breezes brought along. I felt good, though I was pretty tired most of the time, and would go to sleep when Jason played his fiddle in the evenings. I kept putting off using science on the cows; it was really a lot of trouble, and I thought I'd let it wait until my finger got well, at least.

I was hungry to see Isis all the time, and after about ten days I began to have anxious spells about her. But I had to work Sundays and every day, so I could not get to town. I kicked myself because I hadn't made arrangements to write. I planned to send word to her the first time Jason went in with the cream; but he kept putting his next trip off, and I worried more and more. Then, after I had been out just two weeks, I got a letter from my little queen.

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When Mrs. Yardley gave me the letter, laughing and joking for all she was worth, I held it up to the light and turned it around three or four times before I opened it, my heart feeling like it was crawling right up my throat. And then the pretty, scrawly writing on the pages made such a blur and—oh, well, it was all a lot of foolishness, but it was quite a while before I got around to reading the letter. I read it at least eight times a day for a long time and got these words by heart:

DEAR JIMMIE:

Hello. How are you getting along? [I could just hear her say it.] You must be surprised to get a letter from me. I hope you like your job and don't have to work too hard. Even if you are you must be glad and proud of your cross. I expect you are forgetting me already. Maybe that is why I am writing this letter. Would you think so? Are there any girls where you are working? It is such nice weather here in town, though the mornings are pretty cold. I think about you most every time I go past the shack. It is a lovely moonlight night and I would liked to have gone to prayer meeting, but Abby and Dan went and left me to put the children to bed. I am lonesome and wish you were here. Maybe Frank will walk home with Abby and Dan. Don't you get jealous. Ha! Ha! You mustn't mind Frank. The girls are all crazy about him, but I honestly just like him because I can see him doing wonderful things in the Church.

Oh, Jimmie, I just feel like it would be awful if you didn't get that good, decent job and stay here and become the splendid man I can see. I don't know what I would do, honest. Honest, I like you better than anybody. I'll bet you'll be sorry if you forget me and go off hoboing again. You won't, will you? If you have time to write to me, better address it General Delivery, as Abby mustn't know. I'll write again, though I'll have to sneak a stamp, which I hate to do, for it is almost stealing.

Your friend,

ISIS DOWELL.

P. S. I just got the scissors from Abby's workbasket and snipped you a lock of my "red" hair. But I wish you wouldn't call it red.

In spite of the mention of that Frank Dariel, I was so

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pleased when I read this letter that I felt warm all over. I read it again right away, and the postscript made me look down into the envelope; and, sure enough, there was a little roll of white satin in one corner. I fetched it out, unrolled it, and there gleamed a lock of Isis' beautiful hair. I'd look at it, then I'd read the letter again; and by and by I noticed three tiny x's down in one corner. I was never happier in my life. I swore I'd keep on doing better, even if it worked me to skin and bone. I was that proud and joyful.

I sat on there in a big-armed cane-bottom rocker, my feet resting on the nickel bar of the heater, looking through the gray smoke from my corncob at the red and green pattern of the wall paper, and at the brace of elk's horns and the framed mottoes and the crayon enlargements which were hung around, but not really seeing anything in the room at all. I heard Mrs. Yardley rattling the dinner dishes out in the kitchen, and laughing while she scolded the babies; and pretty soon through the blue smoke I saw Isis come in from the kitchen, her gleaming hair done up like a woman's; and she was dressed in the finest, freshest pink gingham, and a white apron with starched bows waving around behind. She came over and sat on the big arm of the cane rocker; and we talked on in the most ideal way, until one of the Yardley babies let out an unearthly yell; and then I ended my daydream by saying to Isis: "You had better go and look after little Jimmie, my love, my queen."

My pipe had gone out now and the smoke was drifting away and I was calming down. So I went upstairs to snooze for a while; but the first thing I did was to make a kind of locket out of the piece of white satin, and I strung it from my neck. I went out to milk that evening feeling mighty good, I can tell you.

I wrote Isis three letters in the next ten days, but I didn't hear another word from her. I didn't worry

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much, for I supposed she hadn't been able to sneak a stamp. Another five days went by. Still no word. I began to get suspicious now, and when I looked her letter over, all I could see was the name of Frank in it. I told my troubles to Jason and the next time he hauled the cream to town he tried to see Isis. But he didn't get to. The second cousin told him that Isis was sick, and she wouldn't even allow him to come in.

"I didn't argy with her," said Jason. "She looked like a holy terror."

I was so worried I felt sick. But I was hostile, too; hostile at the second cousin for being so infernally mean and at Jason for being so meek.

"Well, *I'll* see her, you bet your sweet life!" I yelled. "And this very night, too! You can finish this milkin' yourself! I'm headed for town right now!"

"Who-ah! Who-ah!" Jason drawled out with a grin. "Hold yer hosses. I ain't told you nigh all. Mr. Riner said you was to come in fer that 'ere cream'ry job Monday. Jest three days, now. I'm to fetch you; though, to be honest, I don't want to a mite."

"Oh, *that!* What is *that* job, anyway?" I bawled, too mad for anything.

"Now, now. Go on 'ith yer milkin'. The old woman's goin' to have hot mince pie fer supper. That'll make you feel a heap better."

Well, Jason soothed me down, and I went on with the milking, and the hot mince pie was good at supper time, and I ate two quarters of it. Still, I was feeling rotten when I went to bed. It was concerned discouraging to try with all your might to do better and then have things go wrong, making it seem like no use at all. But I guess that's about the way it always is.

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"Good afternoon. Well—why, how *do* you do! Why, of course you're that young feller as was stayin' with pore old Mr. Malone. Sure I remember you now, though I admit I couldn't place you right off. You lookin' fer a boardin' place?"

Mrs. Ginn, the landlady of the railroad boarding house, wiped her hands on a faded blue-checked apron and smiled in a hospitable way that looked very good, even though her face was wrinkled and bony and one of her front teeth was gone. I was on the back porch and she was standing in her kitchen door.

"No, ma'am, I don't want a boardin' place. Not now, anyway. I just want to ask if you know anything about Isis."

"Do I? Well, I—guess—so!" Mrs. Ginn's little eyes snapped under her heavy black eyebrows, and she pushed some straggling gray hairs back over her head with an angry swipe of her hand. "Do I? I s'pose, young man, you've been to see that Abby Dowell, that good, sanctified Methodist who was always worryin' about Isis and my nice railroad boys, always fearin' some disgrace from them might be plumped down at her door. I s'pose you've been talkin' to *her*, have you?"

"Yes, ma'am, but she wouldn't say a word except to call me names——"

"I guess she wouldn't! Not now, anyway. Well, I guess the time's past now when I'll have to put up with her slander about goin's on in my decent house. She can jest take some of the goin's on of her sanctified church folks, and put *them* in her pipe, and smoke *them* fer a

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while. And I'm not only tellin' you, but I've told *her* so, and right to her face! 'I'm none of your two-faced kind, I'll have you know, Mis' Dowell,' I says, 'and what I've got to say about Frank Dariel and Isis, I'll say right to you——' "

"Yes, ma'am, Mrs. Ginn; that's what I want to know. I don't know if Isis is sick or gone away or what has happened to her."

"Well, sho', you was sweet on her, wasn't you? I recollect now. My mind wanders more than it used to. Well, the long and the short of the whole story is that Mr. Dariel caught Frank and Isis in a scrape, and right in the church, too! He drove the boy from home that very night, and in less than no time of course the news was all around. Isis declared and declared there was nothin' really wrong; I dunno, they might not of been; but they always do take on that way. And Frank left town altogether; and some of the boys who knew him said he was goin' to join the Navy. They always do that too, pretty near. I dunno. I was stricken, I tell you. I had treated Isis like my own girl, and she was *so* religious and sweet. Well, you can never tell about that kind, either; and she was the plague-gondest girl to moon and dream around——"

Her gabble just sort of faded out in my ears and I didn't make a word of it out again for quite a while. I was so shocked I felt just like I wanted to lay down on the porch and cover my head out of the light and never move. Isis had been so lovely and sacred to me, it just simply couldn't be true. I was dreaming a nightmare, or this woman had got everything all wrong from some gossip about Isis being sick, and there couldn't be anything more than neighborhood slander to it. This crazy yarn didn't fit in any way with the ideas and feelings I'd been treasuring along for Isis. It couldn't be so. I just knew it.

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"——and I suspected something like it had happened when Abby brought word that mornin' that Isis was sick and couldn't come to work for a while. I knew she wouldn't look so bad jest over Isis bein' sick. That's the kind *she* is. And then the scandal came out that very day to prove I was right. But Isis was sick in a way. Them two righteous cousins of hers had whipped her so hard she had to take to bed. I didn't blame her fer runnin' off when she got out, even if she had brought disgrace to her cousin's door. I didn't blame her a particle."

"You say she's gone? Where'd she go to, Mrs. Ginn?"

"I dunno. There ain't been a trace of her fer two days."

"Ain't you got the *least* idea?"

"No, I ain't. I 'spect some of my railroad boys have, but you can bet *they'd* be close-mouthed enough about it. Well, now, I'm sorry fer you if you was sweet on her; but I got to run, fer I have a roast in the oven, and here I am talkin'! Don't fergit me if you go to look fer a place to board. This is good as any, if I do say so. Well, good day to you."

The kitchen door banged. I just stood there in a dumb way for a minute, looking at the dirty white knob and the brown spots on the door, where the red paint had peeled away. I felt too miserable to think. It was a fine April day, and the sunlight was streaming through the latticework around; but here was a keg of swill and a pile of wet meat sacks and a can of clabbered milk. The smells that steamed up from them just about sickened me, after I had stood there for a while, and I turned and tramped slowly down the steps.

For some reason I saw every tough-looking thing around so plain that I'll never forget the way that boarding-house back yard and the alley looked to me as I

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dragged along to the gate. There were the rotten pickets in the fence, where it swayed down in the corner to my left; broken-down and withered sunflower stalks along the walk; yellow cabbage stumps and beet leaves in last year's garden; a heap of rags, smashed tin cans, and some rusty barrel hoops against the fence; broken boards in the rickety walk; the shaky gate hanging on one hinge. And there was the path up to Honest John's shack across the alley. A row of blackberry bushes alongside it looked bare and dead and still. The limbs of an apple tree moved a little in the drifting air, but in a slow and mournful way. I didn't look much at the shack, but turned down the alley. It was mucky from showers and melted snow. There were two deep, twisting ruts in it; and on the ridges between them the clods were turning crumbly and brown in the sunlight. There were mudholes all along, and it seemed like I was bound to stumble and slip into every one of them. My brogans were a sight when I got to the street.

I walked on uptown without thinking much about where I was going. I was too full of feelings over what Mrs. Ginn had told me about Isis and that skunk. That was the name I first thought of for Frank Dariel, as I wandered around. I got back to something like my old self after a while, and I worked myself into a rage and used names that were much rougher, but this one stuck and kept mixing in with them. I walked on and on, raging more and more; and finally I found myself in the Silver Leaf, cashing the check Mr. Riner had given me, drinking a couple of beers, and giving some money to three men who looked like team hands, but were not very sociable. I didn't see anyone who looked familiar. And I didn't really want to.

Out I went again, and something drew me along to the Dariel clothing store. I peeked in, but saw no one except a strange clerk. I walked on around the block,

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and then turned up the alley. I saw old man Dariel in his back door, opening a box of goods. I was in such a rage then that I didn't have any sense left at all. I was as wrathy as I had ever been in all my born days. That was what made me do it, and nothing else. Here at the back of a grocery was a pile of rotten vegetables and some broken boxes and bottles. In the mess I spotted a bottle of spoiled ketchup. Almost before I realized what I was doing, I had picked it up and sent it sailing at old man Dariel's head. It smashed against the door-frame above his head, broke, and the spoiled ketchup splattered down on him until his face was a red smear. He yelled like he was killed, and that yell sent me in a run around the corner. I bumped into some man on the street, dodged around him, and then I never stopped running until I reached the railroad yards. I was scared silly now, and my rage was about gone. I called myself a fool, but somehow I felt pretty much relieved.

I sat down in the sunlight behind a pile of ties; and after I had got my breath back, I lit my pipe to quiet my nerves, and then I cussed myself for being the biggest fool in ten counties. Then I had a spell of feeling sorry for myself and cussing everyone I had ever known or had any dealings with, because they all *would* try to make me do better, and it only got me into trouble, and was never any use. Then I had a spell of fear, thinking of how old Dariel might have seen me and set the police to looking for me. Then I thought of the skunk and got wrathy once more and had a spell of cussing about him; blaming myself because I was soft and religious and hadn't smashed his face in that night when he walked home with Isis and her second cousin; it was what I got for not standing up and being a man with Isis, instead of letting her lead me around by the nose. I could have saved her all her trouble then. I'd know it when another girl had her way with me! And that

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skunk would remember it to his last day, if I met up with him just once!

I raged away, and then it seemed like something that had been hurt deep down in my throat had just began to ache; and it kept on aching; and so at last I just sat and thought and thought about Isis and how she was away off, the Lord knew where, and would very likely lose herself altogether and become a bad woman. All the fine and shiny dreams I had treasured about her were gone, and that was all there was to it. How and why things could work around into such a miserable mess, I could not see. Well, you never can.

It was along pretty late in the afternoon when I was brought out of my doldrums by some voices on the other side of the ties. I peeked around, all ready to run from the police, and I saw the three team hands I had given some money to in the Silver Leaf. I didn't want company and pulled back; and I was soon glad I had, for these fellows showed in a minute by their talk that they were not team hands at all, but yeggs. And in a very little while they had me shivering all over. One of them said:

"Well, the dick stopped me and I thought he was goin' to make a frisk; but no; he poked his sap into my guts and bawled: 'You're wise to the punk that tried to dape the rag merchant, ainchuh, hey?' or words to that effec'. I spieled him out of it, but the job's off, anyhow."

"Yeh," growled a hoarse voice. "I'd like to snare that punk and pat him on the lip."

"A tough townie," said the third. "Hard to hook."

"Townie, nothin'! The hoosier which tatted him screwin' down the stem is hep' to all the townies, but couldn't tick him. That's w'y the dick dinged me."

"Ah-hah!" said number two. "I say it was the team hand fuzz-face that bradded us in the joint."

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"Nah."

"Yeh."

"How fer?"

"The ace see guess. He looked quarter-wise. The hoosier squawked that the jobby screwed for the yards. The home-drag of the 'bo, work-simple or wise."

"We might bump him."

"We do," said the hoarse voice of number two, "and I prod his ears down."

"Gangin' up is his needin's. The dicks has us spotted, and the rag-merchant lay is jimmed right. Only show now is to lay low fer a night sneak to the main line."

"And us all shy of coke! Not a rear left! I could crucify that punk!"

I felt glad for a second that my throwing the bottle of ketchup at old Dariel's head had kept him from being robbed this night; but I was mostly scared to death for fear the yeggs would come around to the sunny side of the tie pile and catch me. They always beat up lone team hands as a matter of course, and they would just about kill *me*. They kept on growling about not having any more cocaine, sounding more vicious all the time; and finally I started to sneak over to a switch that held a string of empty box cars. Beyond the switch was the railroad that ran to the sawmill up the river; once on it, I would be in sight of the depot and fairly safe from the yeggs.

But, fool-like, I climbed into a car to get over, instead of crawling underneath. I rattled the door pulling myself up, and here they came! One caught me just as I was leaping out of the car. I yelled and threshed about like a wild colt, so scared I was half crazy. I must have hit the yegg who grabbed me a good lick, for I saw him go sprawling just before another one jumped in and tripped me to the floor. Then it seemed like the whole car was falling in on me, for the two

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yeggs went after me with their feet. Then a kick in the head *did* drive me crazy; and I just heaved myself to my feet somehow, bawling and clawing and swinging like I was possessed; and I can't remember all that happened then, or hardly any part of it. I saw a square of light in front of me; I heard a yell, "Hold him! We gotta frisk him!" and then I was sprawled out in the gravel of a roadbed; and next I was on my feet and running as hard as I could for the depot.

The yeggs didn't chase me very far. When I reached the depot I should have been glad of my luck, I guess, but I was too miserable. I ached inside, and I ached outside. My ribs felt like they had about ten boils on them, and there was a big knot on my head. I went to the farthest end of the platform and stretched out behind some boxes of freight. Let the police come and get me if they wanted to, I thought. Old man Dariel could send me to jail, if that was what he wanted. Mr. Riner could come and take me back to his creamery, or the police could send me back to the school or to my uncle, and I didn't care if I herded sheep or milked cows or anything. I didn't care a rotten dam. And the skunk could go and join the Navy. I didn't care about that either. And Isis—well, I just *wouldn't* think about her. I just lay there in the sun and knew I was as stiff and sore outside, and as achy and miserable inside, as I ever had been or ever hoped to be. I'd never imagined anyone could get into such a muss. And as far as I could see and know, it all came from people trying to make me do better when I never could.

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XI

THE old ways of the old days. I was back in them again, and it seemed like about ten years had gone by since I had caught the head end of a passenger out of Boise for Nampa and then rode the trucks of a Pullman to Pocaloo; the whirling wheels pounding the rails on each side of me, the gravel sucked up from the roadbed peppering my face and hands. Only a month had gone by; a pretty rough old month; but I was feeling lots better now, and had my appetite back.

I was a regular team hand now, working in Leyden Brothers' camp on the Armstead Road. It was a big job for the time. Only a ninety-mile branch line from Armstead in Montana to Salmon City in the mountains of Idaho; but it was deep work, there was a camp every mile and a half, forty-foot fills and cuts all along, and a three-mile tunnel at the Divide. The old-fashioned six-horse Concord stage, and the six-team freighting outfits which had served the Idaho mining town for so long, were seeing the end of their day.

I was getting along as good as I could expect in the Leyden camp. The walking boss had treated me like a real team hand from the first, and never seemed to think of offering me any job but that of driving three mules on a dump wagon. I liked the looks of the round, fat Montana hills, their rusty-red slopes all flushed up with the spring sunlight; they seemed so bright with color, after the gray sagebrush country of Idaho. Each night I went to sleep in the bunk tent with the sound of some fine story or song in my ears. But the thing that made me the most contented, I guess, was the meals fixed up by

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Fingers Clark, who was about the best-known of all the team hand cooks.

The Leyden brothers prided themselves on feeding good; every other Sunday we had chicken, and every day we were fed the finest of steer meat. Chicken or steer, when Fingers Clark roasted meat he roasted it so wonderfully that we couldn't imagine anything better than the roast steer during the week days, and then the roast chicken of a Sunday dinner would always be a real surprise. Fingers Clark was even better at baking pies than he was at roasting meat. The cream pies he made for Sunday dinner were especially good. Fingers would decorate the frothy covers of these pies with the names of the most famous team hands, the letters made from pink or green icing. One pie would have the name of Poker Tom, in fancy pink letters, for example; the edge of another would be circled with the name of Paddy the Devil, and there would be a devil's head in the center, green, and looking as natural as life. It seemed a shame to cut such beautiful pies into pieces and eat them. I guess I ought to have been ashamed of myself, the way I used to stuff up with Fingers Clark's cooking. But it never seemed to hurt me any.

I had three lively young mules to drive, and my work went easy. I always got out and hitched up early at morning and noon, so that I could drive into line behind Poker Tom Travis. He was forever singing out on the works as he drove along. I would tail him up, crowding my mules close to the hind end of his wagon, so as not to miss a word of his songs. This tailing up was against the team hand regulations, but Poker Tom never seemed to mind. He probably liked it because I appreciated his singing so much. He was over forty, and was even more of an old-timer than Paddy the Devil or Gager; and he always looked like a hero to me as he drove ahead; his long body swaying in his blue jumper

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as the dump wagon weaved over the rough borrow-pit road, his tall, black, round-topped hat cocked over his left ear, his coaly hair grown down to a point inside his collar, and his deep, mellow voice just rolling up the words of a fine old team hand song:

"Hoh! I drove three mules, fer Gawge MacVane,
And I drove them three mules on a chain.
Nigh un Jude, and the middle un Jane,
And the one on the stick, she didn't have no name."

Another good song had this first verse and chorus:

I'm done with dark women—hoh, Lulu, my gal!
You've ruined me and wrecked me—hoh, Lulu and Sal!
Go on with yer weepin'—hoh, Sadie and Lize!
But I'll look fer a blondy with blue in her eyes!

So—hoh—
If-ah-you find a blondy, and she ain't too tall,
Save her fer me! Hoh, save her fer me!

And then Poker Tom would sing the old St. Louis barrel house song, "Frankie and Johnny"; there were about twenty verses to it, and two of the last ones were so ripping that they would fairly make me shiver:

Frankie, she drove up the stairway;
Frankie broke into the room;
And a woman screamed, and a man yelled out,
And a gun went: "Boom! Boom! Boom!"
Hoh, she got-ah-her man—hod damn!
Who'd done her wrawh-awng!

Bring out yer rubber-tired hearses!
Bring out yer rubber-tired hacks!
Five men went out to the cemah-teh-ree,
But-ah-only four came back!
Hoh, she buried her man, hod damn!
Who'd done her wrawh-awng!

Poker Tom would grin back at me whenever he sang "The Fuzz-face's Story," for he knew it told about experiences which I had known myself. The verses ran along mostly like this one:

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Oh, I asked him fer a wheeler, he give me a plow,
Wanted me to drive a hook team but I didn't know how.
So I'm trampin' up the mountains, where the hard-rock burlies roar,
And I am still a fuzz-face, a fuzz-face as before.

Poker Tom knew a lot of logger songs, too, and he was especially good at singing the sad one called "The Jam on Garry's Rock." This was the first verse:

Come all ye true-born shanty boys, wherever you may be;
Come sit ye on the deacon seat, and listen unto me.
I'll sing the jam on Garry's rock, and a hero you should know,
The bravest of all shanty boys, the foreman, Young Munro.

There were about fifteen more verses telling about how Young Munro went out and broke a jam by himself and was carried away in the break-up and smashed and mangled by the logs, and how his sweetheart, a beautiful Saginaw girl, mourned herself into a shadow for him, and finally pined away and died. It was about the most beautiful song I had ever heard, for it got sadder in every verse, and the last one would always nearly make me cry:

They decked the graves most handsomely—'twas on the fourth of May.
Come all ye true-born shanty boys, and for a comrade pray!
Engraven on a hemlock tree, which by the beach did grow,
Is the name and date of the mournful fate of the foreman, Young Munro.

The song always made me think about Isis and wonder what had happened to her. But mostly I kept her out of my mind, what with Fingers Clark's fine meals, and Poker Tom's lively songs, and the excitement of the big job.

Hard Foot Rax, the plow-shaker, was a good singer, too; but he had a busy job and did most of his singing at night. Texas was his native State, and Rax was great on the cowboy ballads he had learned down in the Panhandle when he was a boy. Sometimes he would

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stretch out on his bunk and roar them by the hour. Most of them had twenty or more verses. A cow hand would never even hum a short song.

Hard Foot Rax was a mountain of a man and was about fifty years old. He looked much younger; for his lean belly, barrel chest, and shoulders that jutted out like big oak knots from his thick, red neck, didn't have much appearance of age. His hair was a tangle of stiff yellow bristles. His heavy eyebrows were a dirty-white color and reached almost up to his hair, for Hard Foot had about the poorest excuse of a forehead I had ever seen. He had little, pale-blue eyes. The skin over his heavy jaws and short, pudgy nose and clublike arms and hands was never tanned brown; it looked like he had a continual case of sunburn. When he was lying in his bunk the pale hairs on his red arms had a frosty glimmer in the lantern light as he waved his paws, beating time to his songs. I was somehow afraid of him, though he seemed to be good-natured. And sometimes his cow hand songs made me homesick for Idaho. But I did like to see Hard Foot jig. He was surprisingly light on his feet. He said he had been called "Cotton" down in the Texas country; but when he was taken into the team-hand tribe he was monikered "Hard Foot," on account of his wonderful jigging. Some nights he would tell stories about driving big bands of cattle over the old Wyoming trail. I knew they were mostly lies, but he made them sound interesting. He was so big I could never imagine him on a cow pony.

Hard Foot was a first-rate plow-shaker, having the eye and the muscle for this job. Behind the high seat of the big machine a platform lay across the steel frame; and there Hard Foot Rax stood all day, watching the depth of the plowing and the run of dirt up the elevator belt, twisting the wheels that controlled the plow beam and the elevator, bellowing "Hi!" when a wagon was

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filled, and changing plowshares when one was dull. There were times when both bar and share had to be changed. The outfit weighed three hundred pounds, but Hard Foot never looked for help when it was to be thrown into a wagon and hauled to the blacksmith shop. Once he heaved the mass of steel into a dump wagon, and the chains that held the bed bottom snapped like threads. It was then that Hard Foot Rax swelled his chest and stared straight for the first time into the eyes of the high-seat teamster, the king of the camp, the boss of the team hand tribe wherever he roved—Paddy, the great, dark devil, as Gager called him.

I had walked smack into Paddy the Devil in a Pocaloo saloon. He and Red Grabby and Poker Tom and several other team hands had just hoboed in on their way to the Armstead Road. When I stared into a bar mirror and saw the shine of Paddy's coaly whiskers I expected that my bad luck was about to reach its deepest and darkest place, and that Paddy would just kill me for taking to the road again. Then he saw my face in the mirror and he turned around. For a minute he looked at me and I looked at him.

I kept my gaze mostly on his feet at first. His shoes were big tan brogans, with brass eyes and buckskin strings. Then I let my gaze travel up his new bright-blue overalls to the twenty-foot buckskin lash which was wound around his waist, on up the red woolen shirt, which showed where his chest bulged out between the sides of his unbuttoned jumper, on up to his chin, which was wide and flat, like the head of a sledge hammer. Then I saw his teeth shining through the waves of his coaly mustache, and I knew I was safe. His bright Indian eyes and thick eyebrows seemed to be making a frown at me, but I felt all right now, just the same. His wide, white, curly-rimmed hat was cocked on one side of his head, and I knew he was in a pretty good

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humor. No king has ever looked nobler or grander than Paddy the Devil did then, as he stood where the sunlight poured through the door and all around him, his scarred fists resting on his hips, his shoulders jutting out like two anvils, his head up like a lion's, but the humanest kind of a grin coming over his face.

"Well, you just wouldn't do better, would you?" he said finally. "I might have knowed it. It's lucky fer you I ain't mad, like I ought to be. But you got to explain yourself."

Well, I did, only I kept all about Isis to myself. I simply couldn't say a word about her. But I told about Honest John being blown up; and that was a new, exciting story to the gang; and when I got around to telling of my fight with the yeggs, and showing the bruises on my ribs and head and the skinned places on my knuckles, I was up at the bar, drinking my glass, and being as much of a man as any of them. And when my yarn was done, Red Grabby slapped me on the back and yelled:

"I monikered him myself! I knew he was born to be a team hand right!"

And Paddy the Devil had nodded his head with a grin and said that I could hobo with the gang to the Armstead Road. And we had ended up in Leyden Brothers' camp.

Paddy was always a polite and silent man on the job, and he was the same way in camp. He forever seemed to be washing clothes, shaving, and fixing his wonderful mustache and slick, black hair. He was a marvelous high-seat teamster. His twenty-foot lash was so heavy on its hickory stock that I could hardly swing it behind me. I was practicing with it every chance I got, and Paddy would show me how to make the swing, but mostly I would wind it around my neck. But I did get so I could swing a lighter lash in pretty good style, and I had hopes of being a high-seat teamster myself some

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day. Once every hour Paddy would go into action with his big lash; and each time sharp explosions would rattle from the waxed twine popper for three minutes or more. He hardly ever struck one of the mules, but only steamed them up. They never needed more than a noisy warning to make them pick up and move dirt.

Paddy and I often had good talks together after supper, and when he was in the humor he would give me the finest kind of advice. Not about doing better; he never mentioned that any more; but about such things as how to give a short, chugging jolt to a man's stomach when you was fighting him in a clinch, how to duck down and get more power in a swing to the jaw, how to corner-up yourself and beat off a gang, how to handle the different pairs of lines when you were skinning a long team; now Paddy the Devil was really learning me something. He said I was a comfort to him whenever he would get lonesome for Gager. He was afraid Gager had left the country, for he had refused to come North and work on any more small jobs, and had talked a lot about Panama and the government railroad in Alaska the winter before. Still Paddy seemed to keep expecting him.

Paddy and Hard Foot Rax had been getting along together, but everyone felt that a fight was bound to come up between them. Hard Foot hadn't been a team hand for so many years, and the two had never tangled up before. The reputation each one had, it wasn't likely that they would go on for long without finding who was the best man. They both felt it.

But for more than two months the camp life went on in peace. The camp itself was in a valley; we were grading on the hills above it, making a mile-long fill. The stage road wound around the base of the hills; each day we would see the old brown Concord stagecoach roll by, red dust whirling from its wheels, a guard with a rifle

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at the driver's side, trunks and bags inside the railing that fenced the top, faces at the windows. And each day long freight trains made up of four or five covered wagons, coupled together, and hauled by ten-and twelve-horse teams, wormed along the road below. We team hands used to watch the flying stage and the crawling freight trains and say: "We are puttin' an end to that there!" And I guess Gager was right. It was the team hands and hard-rock men and gandy-dancers who put an end to scenes like that all over the West.

This way the days rolled calmly on. Sometimes we'd drive into Armstead on a Sunday and loaf around the saloons with other team hands, or frolic awhile with the girls in the Merry Widow dance hall. There was considerable fighting; for there were many miners in town; and many gamblers, yeggs and pimps, of course. I had a couple of fights myself and came out of them so good that I got to feeling pretty proud of myself. One of my fights was with a big cow hand who was a grown man. He might have whipped me if he hadn't been wearing high-heeled boots and spurs. They made him trip himself, and I didn't let him get up then until he declared he was licked. There were a good many cow hands in that country, and, like cow hands everywhere, they blowed most of their wages on fancy saddles, bridles and spurs. They were meek and shy around us and their eyes would about pop out as they listened to team hand tales. They were not much on the peck and we didn't usually pay a great deal of attention to them. The gamblers, pimps and yeggs were the ones we really had to watch out for, as they had all learned to carry guns in the cities, and they would use them, too. Armstead had always been just a sleepy cow town and freighting headquarters until the railroad started to build, and the only law in the place was a deputy sheriff. He was just

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an old-time cow hand, so no one paid much attention to him. Cow hands are usually good riders, but they seldom amount to much in other ways.

There had been some lively times at the stage-station saloons when the railroad construction first began, until the sheriff came down from Dillon and closed them. There was one near the Leyden camp. Someone discovered that there were cases of whisky which had not been removed from the cellar, and this discovery led up to the most famous fight of the Armstead Road, the pick-handle battle between Paddy the Devil and Hard Foot Rax.

In July a new borrow pit was opened not over a hundred yards from the closed saloon. One evening, just after sundown, Hard Foot Rax and two others went back to the works and tinkered until dark with the grading machine. Then they drove alongside the high board fence around the back yard of the saloon. Hard Foot was boosted over into the yard. Using a bar, he broke open the cellar door; and he brought out five cases of bond whisky, Old Quaker brand. The cases were hauled over the fence with a rope, and Hard Foot followed them. That night the whole camp went on a monster tear.

Before midnight seventy men were either laid out and dead to the world, or else wild-eyed, singing and bawling. I was sober as a deacon, but this was mainly on account of Paddy the Devil. He had snatched a bottle out of my hands when I was taking my second drink, and growled:

"You ain't goin' to drink no more to-night. They'll be trouble, most likely, 'fore mornin'. You lay low, see, and take out when it starts."

After midnight the team hands who were still on their feet tried a poker game. Oklahoma Joe, the peg-legged night watchman, wasn't drinking either; and the two of

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us stood in the door of the poker tent and looked on. Bottles stood on the tables where the team hands were ganged around. As soon as one was empty a full one was uncorked and shoved in its place. There was a drink around each table at every hand. It was terrible poker-playing; most everyone was trying to cheat, and would get caught every time; then everybody would laugh and make a joke out of it. But by and by they were getting serious, then they were sullen; and I agreed with Oklahoma Joe when he said: "Trouble's about to pop."

It popped when Poker Tom caught Hard Foot Rax trying to slip some aces into his hand. Poker Tom laughed, made a drunken swipe at the cards, and knocked them to the floor. Hard Foot let out a roar, and his paw seized Poker Tom by the throat; but Paddy the Devil, who had been watching the game from behind, clutched the big, red wrist. Slowly the hand was forced from Poker Tom's neck, then Hard Foot gave in, but swearing like sixty about it. His wrist was turned loose, and I saw a yellow-white band between two splotched lines of red around it, showing the power of Paddy the Devil's tough, brown hand.

Brock Brown, the walking boss, was drunk as anyone; and now Paddy the Devil began to boss the tribe. He ordered the team hands to get out of the poker tent and to bed. He appeared to be perfectly sober, but he really had a fine fighting edge on, and all the others still had sense enough to know it. Even Hard Foot Rax didn't say any more; he just stared one second into Paddy's blazing eyes, then staggered out after the other team hands.

In the morning a gloomy gang sat down to breakfast. Hard Foot passed his usual place and took one directly across the table from Poker Tom. He looked mighty mean. He didn't say anything until he had finished a

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cup of coffee, then he scowled across the table and snarled out:

"I 'low you'll tell everywhere you caught me goin' crooked last night, huh? Tellin' all the stiffs how slick y'are. Jest lemme hear it! Jest lemme, that's all!"

"Aw, we was all drunk. Most all cheatin'. Fergit it," said Poker Tom.

"There you go! There you go, already, jest like the plain, ornery, no-good skunk y'are!" Hard Foot was just going it to work himself up. "And I'm goin' to tell the stiffs what's more—you're a nigger! Y'damn right! Pertendin' like you're actin' when you're singin' them levee bar'l house songs! You're a *real* nigger. I'm a-sayin'; and no nigger's goin' to lie around about Hard Foot Rax, what I mean!"

Poker Tom's face turned red, but he still tried to pay no mind to the raging mountain of a man.

"Le's see yer nigger hands—yer nigger finger nails!"

Hard Foot's paw went over the table, but Poker Tom jumped back off the bench. He couldn't hold in any longer when he got to his feet.

"You dirty, lyin' Texas Bohunk!" he yelled.

"Boy, I'm makin' you eat that talk!"

Hard Foot Rax got up from his seat, tramped around the table, and stood before Poker Tom, scowling down at him and not making a move for a good minute. Poker Tom's face was white now, but he didn't budge back. At last it seemed he couldn't stand it any longer and he took a swing at the big red face above him. It did no more good than if he had hit an anvil. Hard Foot laughed in a hoarse, devilish way, threw an arm around Poker Tom's neck, twisted his head down, and smashed his fist time and again into the bare face. Nobody interfered. Blood was running down Hard Foot's arm. Poker Tom's body sagged down. Hard Foot dragged him out of the dining tent, dropped him to the

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ground and fetched him a kick. Paddy the Devil came out of the bunk tent just as Poker Tom was staggering up to his feet and wiping the smears of blood from his smashed-up face. Paddy the Devil looked at him, and he looked at Hard Foot; but he didn't say a word, and he didn't slack a step in his walk to the cook tent. But he got a flame in his eyes that made me think of how an Indian chief must have looked out on the warpath.

And after breakfast he never said a word to anybody as he harnessed his mules and took them out to the works. Soon the wagon teamsters followed him. The first round of the borrow pit was made. The teamster ahead of me drove under the elevator. Paddy the Devil yanked the whipstock out of its socket and whirled the long lash out in coils behind him. The waxed-twine popper curled over Hard Foot's head and snapped his hat to the ground. The big plow-shaker got down, picked it up, and climbed back on the machine without saying a word. When I drove under the elevator Paddy the Devil whipped back the lash and knocked Hard Foot's hat off again. The plow-shaker turned gray around the lips, and his little eyes fired up; but he stood at his wheel and never made a move after the hat, and never looked up at Paddy.

I pulled out with my load of dirt. Then I looked back. I saw Paddy the Devil swing the lash back for the third time. Now it snapped along Hard Foot's cheek and slashed the skin open from his ear to his mouth. And this time he roared out a string of cusswords a mile long. Paddy stopped his twelve mules and leaped from the high seat to the ground. I stopped my team and watched. My heart seemed about to pound through my ribs.

"Get down and fight this out," said Paddy the Devil, as calm as could be.

Hard Foot Rax wavered on his feet and rubbed at

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the blood that was spreading over his neck. Then he looked down at the jockey box under the high seat. Two picks, among other tools, were kept there. Hard Foot leaned over suddenly, grabbed a pick, bounced the handle out with one jolt; and, swinging the handle, he jumped down from the machine. Paddy the Devil wasn't caught. He dodged under the noses of the wheel mules, leaped along the tongue, and had the other handle out of the pick before Hard Foot reached him. He jumped down, and the two faced each other on the floor of the borrow pit. The pick-handle battle was on!

I was fearfully excited. I have a powerful memory of how I was feeling then, but as for telling every move of the famous fight, I simply can't do it. There were the bald, wrinkled hills on the other side of the valley, and the green stretches of land on each side of the creek, and the road down below, and up here was the wide red floor of the borrow pit; the twelve mules, standing six abreast in front of the grading machine, a string of dump wagons, team hands running up, a circle of them, but just a sort of red haze whirling around inside of the circle. That is just how I remember the battle when I try to see it again. Now and then I get flashes of the mighty figure of Paddy the Devil springing out of the red haze; smoky flames seeming to shoot from his dark face, black hair, red shirt and wild eyes; his great right arm swinging, jabbing, guarding with the shiny yellow club which is in his fist. There were times when I felt like I wanted to plunge in there myself and go wild and rear around and draw blood somewhere. That was when I would see a rusty yellow head and red face shine up in the fight. But mostly I just stood and gaped, like the other team hands; no one saying a word, no one seeing anything right; for every man there had a different story to tell about the battle when it was over with.

It lasted a good ten minutes. It ended when the

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handle in Paddy's fist was split by one of Hard Foot's swings. The big plow-shaker leaped in to make a finishing lick; but, instead of ducking back, Paddy the Devil lunged to meet him, the butt of the splintered pick handle gripped in his fist. Hard Foot's swing was never finished; for he stepped directly into the way of a blow that was sailing for his jaw. The handle butt in Paddy's fist hit him like a hammer; he dropped on his face without a groan; and then Paddy the Devil fetched him just such a kick as Poker Tom had taken in the ribs, and stood there growling and panting. I can still see the *end* of the fight plain enough! I felt so relieved I almost fainted. And I *had* swallowed my chewing tobacco.

Paddy the Devil was bruised and bloodied up mighty bad himself. The engineers had to haul both the battlers to Armstead, in their light wagon, and both had a siege of it in the railroad hospital.

Poker Tom left the camp, too, and it didn't seem like anything now. I got to feeling like I just had a job, and nothing else. And Fingers Clark's cooking didn't agree with me so well any more. I would dream regular nightmares about the pick-handle fight, and I'd wake up and lie there and think about Isis for a half an hour at a stretch, and I'd feel so infernally restless out on the job sometimes I wouldn't know what to do with myself. It seemed like the old Nick himself had got into me in Boise that winter and was bound to make a terrible fight of it before he'd let go. I stood the camp until I heard that Paddy was out of the hospital, then I went into Armstead to see him. Well, I saw him, all right; and that's another thing I'll never forget.

The night before, Paddy the Devil was in the Merry Widow dance hall. He saw Dago Tony, a pimp, lift a gold watch from the pocket of an engineer who was drunk and making a fool out of himself with one of the girls. Paddy knocked the pimp down, took the watch

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away from him, and kicked him out. Paddy went to his room a little after midnight. When he was asleep Dago Tony slipped down the hall, opened the door of the room, aimed a Colt 44 at Paddy the Devil to kill him, and killed him.

They picked up Paddy the Devil in the doorway. Five bullets were buried in his body. He was still trying to fight when he died; he had got this far after his man before he went down.

There were three hundred team hands at his funeral in Butte. He was in an oak coffin with shining handles, and there were lots of flowers. I looked at his face, and it appeared so natural that I felt strange to think that Paddy the Devil would never lead a gang of team hands again. But I knew it was so, and it made me feel pretty tough, I can tell you. He was all man, Paddy was.

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XII

A MISERABLE winter had gone by for me in Idaho, I had worked through a gloomy spring on the Oregon Coast, and now a weary old summer was near its end. That was the way the seasons had seemed to me after I left the Armstead Road; I hate to think about the times I had then; I don't want to tell about them, they are so mean and tough to remember, and I guess nobody is asking me to.

Right now I was feeling like my good old self for the first time in months. Six weeks before, I had set in at Leyden Brothers' camp near Eugene, Oregon. They had got a contract on the Southern Pacific Cut-off, after leaving Armstead. Red Grabby was now bossing their camp. Five weeks after I landed there he put me on the high-seat of the grading machine. He said that anyone who had been taught by Paddy the Devil ("Rest his fightin' old soul," said Red Grabby) to swing a slasher and tighten the lines over a big team should never waste away on a dump wagon, if he could help it. Besides, I had skinned a machine for a gypo outfit in Idaho the winter before. After a week on the high-seat of Leydens' machine I was making it fine.

I was proud of myself, and I guess I had a perfect right to be.

But I was feeling particularly good now over my new plow-shaker. He had finished his first day, supper was done, and he was having a lying contest with Snub Peters. Snub was not a team hand; he was a logger who bossed the gang that was clearing the big fir timber off the right-of-way. Snub was the champion liar of camp until this

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new plow-shaker came in, but I knew he was in for a beating now, for this new plow-shaker was nobody else but—well, it's easy to tell by his talk who he was. Even the Leyden boys themselves joined the mob of listeners in the big bunk tent.

"I struck many another camp on the North Bank Road," said my plow-shaker, finishing the story he had told in turn. "I missed never a one but the gypo jobs. It was ever the same. The wind blowing hard, and clouds of sand in the stormy wind. A camp sand-covered in one lone night. I have told you of that. But now I shall tell of Cyclone Cut, where the wind was a devil and the sand was his fire.

"'Baloom! Baloom! Baloom!' the wind would shout thunderously on the nights when it was his time to blow out of Funnel Valley. This valley was really a mammoth cave with a broken roof, and once a week or so the wind would roll out of it in a terrific whirl. Thundering and whirling down the right-of-way; and every time he would lift the Cyclone Cut, thrust it out on top of the fill, and leave it there!

"A cut on top of a fill! Such a thing was unheard of; to have laid steel in such a cut would have violated all customs of tracklaying; so there was nothing for it but to move the cut back to its hill and hope that the wind would not blow out of Funnel Valley again until the cut was bound down by steel rails.

"The other cuts and fills were finished. Ties were strung, rails were spiked. Engines and trains waited only on Cyclone Cut. But the wind would always whirl and thunder out of Funnel Valley ere the tracks could be placed. Once a section of track was spiked in an end of the cut; then the wind tore down, broke the greater end of the cut off, and whisked it out on the fill again. Then the section of track had to be taken up, so that the broken

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parts of the cut could be knitted together. The railroaders all gave up hope.

"But the North Bank Road was completed, you say. The track has been laid, and trains have roared over them for many years. But who conquered the wind in Cyclone Cut? And how was it done? You are amazingly ignorant of history, Snub Peters.

"The conqueror of the wind was Barnum, the circus man. He wanted to bring his circus over the road and he could get his train no further than Cyclone Cut. Barnum knew the mastery of winds. He had always beaten them away from his circus tents.

"At Cyclone Cut he marched his men from the train one day, when the cut had just been moved back to its proper place. Each one of Barnum's men carried ropes, stakes and mauls. And Barnum had them stake and tie the cut down in the fashion they used with the circus tents. And when the wind thundered and whirled again out of Funnel Valley, though the stakes were bent and the ropes were stretched under the strain, Cyclone Cut was held in place. The track-layers, after a hasty cheer for the genius of Barnum, the circus man, fell to work, and in two days they had the cut securely bound down with ties, spikes and rails. The North Bank Road was done. I have told you of winds, Snub Peters. I would hear from you again."

We all laughed, and we expected Snub Peters to laugh, also, showing that he had given in. But he didn't. He wasn't ready to quit yet. He swung a solemn stare around the circle of men who were sitting on boxes and bunks, enjoying the contest between him and the plow-shaker as much as they would a fight. Then he slowly bit a chew off a big plug, got it stowed away properly, cleared his throat a couple of times, and showed that he was all set and ready for his turn.

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"I s'pose you know all the country along the North Bank Railroad, bein' as you stopped at so many places to examine the nacher and disposition of the winds?"

"A very sly supposition, Snub Peters," said my plow-shaker. "Sly, but fair. My answer: Yes, truly."

"Then you know all about the Bozee Basin, of course."

"Can it be that anyone lives who doesn't know it?"

"Friend, I'm certainly glad to hear you admit that you know the Bozee Basin," said Snub Peters heartily. "It shore does me good. I'd suspected you a little when you brought Barnum into your story; it seemed to me he died long afore the North Bank was built; and you got to admit your story sounded a little long and a mite wide—like it was stretched some, you know. But now I'm satisfied.

"As everybody here knows, the only fellers who've been on the North Bank and won't admit knowin' the Bozee Basin is liars. For in the center of the Bozee Basin is a rig that's known as Liars' Terror. It's a tree. Over in that country they take out and out liars who can't be reformed over to the Bozee Basin, and they string 'em up!

"Many a liar I've seen danglin' from that Liars' Terror tree in the Bozee Basin, and often for tellin' no worser-soundin' a yarn than what our friend here has just spinned. Their trouble was that they couldn't *prove* their stories, and they didn't have the art to make 'em sound reasonable, so the enraged populace would take 'em out to the Bozee Basin and hang 'em. Our friend here, of course, can prove *his* story; and he *did* have the art to make it sound reasonable, anyway, didn't he?

"That Liars' Terror tree in the Bozee Basin was a most peculiar tree. It was petrified, but it budded out green leaves every spring, and it was rich with seeds every fall. They would blow out over the fertile soil of the Bozee Basin, and they seemed to grow amazing well. When I left the Bozee Basin they was little stone

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treelets all over the land. They grow terrible slow, but I allow they'll be a reg'lar petrified forest there in time. Which will make it powerful perilous for liars."

He paused and stared solemnly at my plow-shaker. The rest of us didn't say a word, but just watched the word-fighters.

"He's spoken true," said my plow-shaker. "He has spoken true and right. I can back up every word he says, for I planted that tree myself!"

We all roared and laughed then. We couldn't help it. Even Snub Peters grinned.

"Aye, lads," said my plow-shaker, in a melancholy voice, "I know that tree as my own. It is a mournful mark of a failure of my youth. I must ask you kindly not to laugh, as it's a sad, sad memory for me. The thought of that tree makes me weep even now, for it helped to make me what I am, a poor son of toil. But once I ruled the Bozee Basin.

"I was the first man in the Bozee Basin, and I homesteaded there. I had my homestead cleared by the time I had proved up on it. I wanted a hay ranch; and, being young in spirit and romantic of soul, I was tempted to adventure in hay. And I fell.

"Instead of seeding with a good, safe, conservative kind of hay, I decided to try alfaloofy, a very rare kind of hay that had only been grown in a small valley in Australia. Doubtless few of you have ever heard of alfaloofy. How often have I wished that knowledge of it had never come to me!

"But I had heard of it, and I was tempted to send to Australia for some alfaloofy seed. I got sacks of it and sowed it thickly on every acre of my ranch.

"It was a tremendous surprise. The very first year that alfaloofy made my homestead look like a jungle. The average stalk was as thick as a man's leg, and the sickles of my mowing machines couldn't touch them. I

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was made sick with worry. There I had a hundred tons of alfaloofy to the acre, and it appeared that it would surely rot in the field.

"But, just when I was fairly desperate, I got an idea. The alfaloofy could not be harvested in the regular way; well, then, I'd *log* it off! So I sent an order to Portland for a carload of brush hooks, axes and falling saws. Then I hired a crew of loggers.

"My idea succeeded. The loggers sawed, chopped and hooked the big stalks of hay down, and when they were cured I had them yarded into stacks by a couple of donkey engines.

"I was the hay baron of the whole Bozee Basin country. I was sure that I would soon be made a millionaire by my alfaloofy.

"But a man never knows. Next season my fine young alfaloofy crop began to wilt and turn brown when its stalks were no taller than a man's head. It had only *begun* to grow! Creeping up a miserable four inches a day—and it all died—perished in its early youth! I could discover no reason for its premature decline. I was broken-hearted.

"Next spring I learned the cause of the alfaloofy's death. Among a tangle of dead stalks I saw a glimmer of green. It was the leaves of that infernal tree which you have just heard about!

"You see, there'd been some petrified tree seeds among my Australian alfaloofy seed, and I'd never suspected them! If I had noticed them at all, I'd only have thought that they were plain little pebbles. Fate was against me. There was no help for it.

"After it got its start the petrified tree had magnetized all the minerals in the soil of my homestead and drawn them to its roots. There was no longer any hope for my alfaloofy or for any other kind of hay. So I left the tree for the people in the Bozee Basin country to hang

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liars on. I've been a team hand ever since. That experience with alfaloofy simply took all the heart out of me.

"I have never told that experience before, as that was strange hay, and it was a strange tree. But I feel safe in telling it now, as Snub Peters is here, and he has seen the tree. Under what circumstances he saw it I don't know. But I'm glad he got away, for——"

"Got away!" yelled Snub. "Holy old snags and widder-makers! Are *you* intimatin' that *I* might of been strung up as a liar once? Sufferin' old chilblains!"

"I intimate nothing, certainly," said my plow-shaker mildly. "I'm plainly saying, old-timer, that I'm glad to have you prove my story's truth; you've seen the tree, and you can tell all of the team hands here——"

"All right. All right," growled Snub Peters. "I'm licked. Lie on, Macduff. I ain't sayin' another word."

And Snub Peters *didn't* say another word. He got up and walked straight out of the tent, without paying any attention to the laughs and jokes that the crowd shouted after him. There was a logging camp about a mile from Leydens'; and Snub Peters walked over there to spend the rest of the evening.

"You ought to write some of that stuff you tell," somebody said.

"I have written it," said my plow-shaker. "I have written it, but what I write I burn!"

Yes, it was Len Gager, and nobody else. It couldn't have been. There never was anybody else like Gager, and there never will be.

The crowd began to break up now. Some team hand lit the lamps that hung from the big ridge pole, as the light was getting dim. Eight others started two pedro games over the long table in the middle of the tent. The others sat on their bunks and talked. Soon there was a streaky blue haze around the lamps. Gager sat on his bunk, Red Grabby was beside him, and the two were talk-

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ing pretty solemnly. I guessed that they were speaking of Paddy the Devil, and I moved over closer, so that I could hear.

Gager looked lean and hard. His black eyes still had the old fire in them, but they didn't seem so nervous now. And he didn't make so many fancy motions when he talked, and his voice didn't sing out in that deep rich style he had used when I met him before. It was very much more common. Of course I'd never known him before when he was sober, but he'd changed anyhow. He'd been in Alaska for a year, and he seemed to have had a tough time of it there, working on the government railroad, then prospecting up the Mackenzie and being snow-bound in an Indian camp all winter. He'd come down to Leydens' camp from Seattle as soon as he heard that Paddy the Devil had been killed in Armstead. And Red Grabby had put him up behind me, on the grading machine. This first day he'd been quiet and solemn; but he had shown something of his old spirit in this lying contest; and I hoped that all the heart hadn't gone out of him yet. There was some hot color in his face as Grabby finished his story.

"And so our Devil fought to the end" Grabby was saying. Then he shook a thick finger at me. "There ought to be another like him. A high fighter and a rare slasher-slinger he should be. But it's hard to tell about the young 'burlies nowadays. Well, Gager, I got to leave you. There's an engineer clerk to see in the commissary. Dirt-movin' has got so damn technical I'm about run ragged."

"So long, Grabby," said Gager.

Red Grabby left the tent, and Gager sized me up sharply as I stepped over in front of him.

"The great dark devil left you his job," he said finally. "You can swing the lash, Appanoose Jim, you can swing your twelve hard on the borrow-pit turn, for you've a

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chest like a stuffed barrel, and your arm is long and thick. What's your age now, little one?"

"Nineteen," I said.

I wouldn't be for a while yet, but I wasn't ashamed of saying I was, when the truth was not much over eight months off. Besides, I was lots over nineteen in muscle and size.

"Well. And there's a glint of fighting fire in the gray of your eye. Have you known battle?"

"I sure have, Gager," I said. I knew I ought to tell him the truth about this. "And I only been licked once, and that was when three yeggs tackled me before I went to Armstead."

"There may be another comradeship, if the day is not too late," said Gager in a low voice, and looking down like he was talking more to himself than me. Then he suddenly swung himself to his feet. "Come, little one; let's tramp through the trees and look for a star. Already the restless devils are tormenting me."

I said I'd be proud to take a hike with him, so he got his hat, and we left the tent.

"Watch your neck, Gager!" Spot Evans yelled, as we went out. "You might bump yerself into a petrified tree somewheres out there!"

Gager paused outside, as he heard the team hands laugh.

"Good Gager. Good clown," he muttered. And he said to me: "Shall I make you laugh, Appanoose Jim?"

"I like to laugh, but I like to hear you talk serious, too, Gager," I said. "You say just what you please."

"That's the old fight, little one." His voice warmed up. "Learn first to shun the plain ideal. Who has ever spoken it better than Honest John Malone? 'Solid comfort. Satisfied.' Curse such a thought, Appanoose Jim! Trample it!"

I didn't want to admit that I was satisfied with solid

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comfort myself pretty often, and I didn't see the use of lying about it, so I just kept silent. Gager and I were both quiet as we took a trail through the timber and left the camp. The last tint of grayness was going out of the twilight now, and we couldn't see much of the camp, except the big blotches of light which shone through the roofs of the bunk tents. There was no moon, and the trees were dark and solemn and still. There were stars sparkling brightly now, but the boughs of the firs almost hid them away. I didn't like the timber very well at night; it seemed to shut down on me and made me wish I was back on the open Idaho hills. The trees seemed mournful and lonesome when they were quiet, and they were very quiet tonight.

"I was thinking of Paddy," said Gager at last. "But now I would hear of you, little one."

Well, I don't know whether it was the kind of mournfulness in the twilight passing out of the woods, making a lonesome feeling around, or the thoughts of the miserable months I'd been having, or the sympathy that seemed to be in Gager's deep voice, but, anyway, something made me want to break loose and tell him all that I'd felt and seen and been through in those months. And I did. I just poured everything out, and what I had to tell was mostly misery, and what a relief it was! I don't care how big and tough his muscles are or how ambitious he is to be a man, a young fellow like I was can't get away from his kid feelings all at once; and every so often he gets to wanting some grown man or woman to load all his troubles on, so he can be free to cut loose and frolic around and just be a kid again, for a little while, anyway. Usually I hadn't wanted to, and I never could when I did, for there wasn't anybody. But right now I did want to, and I didn't have any mercy on poor old Gager. He was certainly fine to me. He let me run on, never say-

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ing anything himself, except for a question now and then, to show his interest.

"And her name was Isis! What Methodist christenings! She *was* a Methodist, eh, little one?"

"She was, Gager. And the most really religious one I ever saw."

And I went on to tell him about Isis imagining me as a fine minister saving many souls for the Church, and of her imagining that skunk, Frank Dariel, being the same thing. It was certainly her religious nature, I said to Gager, that got Isis into her trouble. He listened without a word then, until I had told of my battle with the yeggs.

"A brave idyl," said Gager then. "Your head was bloody but unbowed. And you healed your wounds with work on the Armstead Road. I have seen all of Paddy's tricks on the high-seat to-day. But go on, Appanoose Jim."

"Paddy was mighty good to me, Gager. He never complained a bit because I hadn't done better, after I told him how things had gone with me in Boise. He spent hours in the evenin's, teachin' me how to throw his big slasher and how to jiggle the twelve so's to hold a straight furrow. At the last he would change three or four times a day with me, skinnin' my dump wagon, while I handled the machine team."

But Gager wouldn't let me tell of Paddy's death, saying he had heard the tale too often.

"How were your winter days?"

"Fine at first, Gager. I couldn't stand it in Montana after Paddy was gone, so I rambled back to Idaho. I set in at a Twin Falls reclamation camp, and when the freezin' weather come I got the machine team, as the job was terrible cold, and nobody wanted it much. Well, the front wheel of the machine had to bounce over

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a frozen chunk of muck one mornin', and I was pitched over among my wheel mules. One of 'em give me a nasty kick that cracked my collar bone. When I got out of the hospital I caught a freight, thinkin' I'd go to Boise and see if I could get news of Isis. Two shacks ditched me when the train was ramblin' thirty an hour. I slipped on the snowy roadbed, dived into a pile of lava rocks, and I laid there, knocked out, until a section gang picked me up. Then I was in the hospital with pneumonia until March.

"It was a good company hospital, and bein' sick wasn't so bad, as it was a mighty hard winter; but when my strength began to come back, it seemed like something else was missin'. I was sick of the desert country, all of a sudden, sick of the team hand tribe, sick of thinkin' about Isis. In fact, I got so I couldn't help but feel I'd been a fool about her, though I knew I never had. And I would have the most restless, gloomy and discontented spells. I couldn't understand it, for my muscles felt strong as ever, and I never did have a better appetite. But something was still wrong with me, Gager, and it has been ever since.

"For instance, when I got out into the early spring sunlight I found I couldn't enjoy myself with the team hands in the saloons so much any more. I'd be with them awhile, and out I'd have to go, ramblin' around the streets of Twin Falls. And here was the peculiar thing, Gager: it seemed like there was ten times as many girls in the town as there had been the fall before. I'd never have believed that so many girls could be in such a small town, or that so many girls could have so many shapes and sizes. It seemed like I was bound to take an almost morbid interest in them. I got so I would look over every one I met, from her head to her feet, and it always made me feel more restless and discontented and gloomy than ever when I did.

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"Well, I decided I needed a change, so I hoboed it finally to the Willow Creek project in Oregon, and then I made a jump that puts me in the rambler class, I guess; I hooked the mail train in Huntington one night and held her down to Portland, four hundred and fifty miles away. I thought I'd try city life for a while and see if it wouldn't get me back into my old ways of feeling', so I got a job drivin' a scraper team out on a street-gradin' job, but it didn't do me any good. The wet weather made me discontented when I was workin', and the girls around made me discontented when I wasn't. So I hit out for the Klamath Falls end of this cut-off.

"It was a rotten camp, a regular scissor bill outfit, and I couldn't get anything better than a wagon team. The grub was rotten, and the bunks were louse cages right. I certainly did get miserable there, Gager. I got to thinkin' of how I might end up in this life, and that was one thing I never had thought about before. It made me sick to think that sometime I might be a feeble-minded, weak-bodied old stiff like some of the broken-down dynos who was workin' in that camp. And it made me sick to think I'd probably end up like so many of them did—get the black bottle in a county hospital and be planted in the county buryin' ground, or at the best help to start a cemetery in a new railroad town. It was a terribly sad and mournful thing to think about, Gager, and I let it prey on my mind so much that I even wrote a poem or two. I could sing one of them to the tune of a Methodist hymn. This poem's first line was: 'I say thee all a sad farewell,' and the others was about as mournful. The second poem's first line was: 'Poor old Jim in a pauper's grave.' They expressed how I was feelin'. I don't say them much any more, for luck is breakin' better for me now."

I stopped talking then, for I had suddenly begun to feel foolish over writing those poems about death. It

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had done me more good than I'd have believed possible, just to speak out free about all my troubles to Gager. We tramped on along the trail through the dark trees, and Gager didn't say anything for a while, and I was thinking. Life looked fresh and bright again, better than it had seemed in months. My troubles and miseries were pushed away out, and there was a big clear space all around me. Even my worries about my job went out of mind. I felt that I was the best machine-skinner in the team hand tribe; I felt a new power in my muscles, like I was able to whip any man I met; I felt the gloom go away from the trees; I thought of Isis, and I felt like I could pick her or any other girl up in my arms and make her go any way I pleased. I was the biggest fool alive to have been so miserable all these months. Writing sad love poems about Isis! Writing sad dying poems about myself! I, this roaring young burly, Appanoose Jim Turner, who could walk on any man in Leyden Brothers' camp!

That was a wonderful moment. I never did feel so proud of myself again, and I guess I never will. The beauty part of it was that I had never really hit a man's stride yet, I was just imagining how wonderful it would be, and my imagining it wasn't choked down by any real manlike experience.

Gager knew what I was feeling, and he knew, too, there was many a slip ahead.

"I must know you better, little one," he said at last. "I saw the promise of a comradeship of adventure. But I am not sure. I speak two words: Panama! The Andes! In a month a certain ship sails. It is for me, Appanoose Jim; but is it for you? We shall see. Sometimes I forget there are women in the world. We shall speak of them ere we speak of adventure. Now I will say you have made me your friend. Shake hands, as man to man."

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We stopped by a big fir and shook, and I was so kind of choked I couldn't say a word. I wasn't feeling bad, of course, but everything was so fine it seemed too good to be true. I knew I wouldn't feel better if I lived to be a hundred.

Then we heard a tramp of feet on the trail. It was Snub Peters.

"Got to clown it a while now," said Gager to me.

And he did. He kept Snub and I laughing heartily all the way back to camp.

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XIII

GAGER explained it all to Indiana Beaut and me that last night on the Barbary Coast in Frisco, the night before he caught the Panama boat. He made it plain to me where my trouble lay, and he made it plain to Indiana Beaut, too. We'd both been having a more or less miserable time of it the last year, and neither one of us knew what the trouble was. I'd been laying my misery on to a lot of different things—on my uncle, who'd wanted me to herd sheep, on the Presbyterians, who'd wanted me to quit chewing tobacco, on the friends who'd tried to make me do better, on the team hand tribe, and on hard luck generally. It was Gager who showed me what a fool I was to lay my miseries on to what I had to buck up against in life; it was Gager who made me realize that both the joys and troubles of a man's life come from the particular feelings in him that he calls his soul, and not from the things around him. "There are devils of torment and angels of delight in every man's soul. Love of women is their bread and their wine. And the devils feed best." I didn't understand what he meant by that, of course, but Gager went on to show that what had been ailing me, mainly, was a concerned sort of an uneasy, sickening hunger for nothing else but women.

After Gager had told me that, and I'd thought about my past year, I decided he was right. I knew the gloomy, restless and discontented feelings that had been tormenting me were a lot different from the sad, sweet and dreamy ones I used to have about Isis Dowell. And they were not like the kind of disgusted ones I would have when I was with a gang of team hands, perform-

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ing around the cribs. But they had always been stirred up more or less whenever I met pretty girls on the streets of the towns I had gone through. I know now they were just growing pains I was having in getting to the ways of a man laborer.

Laborers, I guess, get more concerned about women than any other class of men. And women, young women especially, generally take pretty well to laborers; for they are husky and fine-looking, as a rule; and they are usually good, amusing company, as they go out for a good time and don't bother to talk about such dry stuff as politics, business and books, which young women can't naturally care for.

There's no use saying real women mind hard hands and sweat and rough, soiled work clothes on men, unless they've been brought up to scorn them, for they don't naturally. I've seen more than one young farmer in the hayfield wipe the sweat off his mouth to give his wife a kiss when she brought him a pitcher of cold lemonade; and every time there was a good, honest kiss in return; and often enough from a woman pretty enough to make even an actor look twice. And I've seen the same thing with a grease-covered mechanic in the shops, when his wife would bring his lunch to him. These nice and pretty ideas about the way men and women love are well enough for high-school kids, but the real thing is a lot different. Muscle and hard work and all that goes with them are natural to a man; and any real woman, I don't care how high up she is, down deep in her soul likes them better than your soft, moony stuff. From this time I met Gager, when my women troubles really began, on to now, they have never come from wanting just one woman and trying hard to get her, like fancy educated men always do in stories; but they have come from being mixed up with three or four at once and letting them all get me up a blind alley.

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During this past year my shoulders had widened out, and I had learned to swagger along in my mackinaw and overalls in pretty fine style. I had got into the habit of cocking my team hand hat over my left ear, so that the hair would wave down from under it and over my forehead on the other side. I guess I didn't cut such a bad figure. The team hands used to say that I gave the girls a treat whenever I pranced down the main drag. And maybe I did. Anyhow they would usually size me up pretty sharply, and often enough they would smile like they couldn't help themselves. But I don't want to brag about being a lady-killer. Maybe I was; but it certainly isn't right and proper to brag about it, even when you really are; my aim here is only to show how I began to be a real man laborer, and a man laborer's story can't be true unless it shows his ways with women in it.

I was still ignorant of the nature of these new feelings of mine, but I got along much better with myself after Len Gager became my plow-shaker in Leyden Brothers' Oregon camp. What I needed most then was somebody to tie to, and I couldn't have found anybody better than him. With his stories and songs, he was a light for everyone in the bunk tent of nights. Whenever I'd get to feeling restless and miserable I could sit down and listen to his stories, or take a walk with him around the camp and hear him talk about the adventures he hoped to have on the big Panama Canal job this coming winter, and I'd get to feeling jolly and free again. And when I'd make a hint about going down there with him, Gager would only wave his hand and say:

"I am a toiler of fortune, Appanoose Jim. I require a hard comradeship. You are a brawny youth, but my adventurer will need a heroic heart. The years may give you the substance of the great dark devil. The days will tell. Toil on, little one. Hold fast to that which is good. It is best to wait."

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Life went on in a pretty good style for about three weeks.

I was sure of my job right now, and I was enjoying it. In the mornings Gager and I would go out together to harness the machine team. Being the plow-shaker, it was his job to take care of the six wheelers. Mine were the lead stock. I liked the fir timber fine in the mornings, as the smell of it would whet up my appetite as soon as I got out of the bunk tent. Gager and I would try to beat each other harnessing up, and he nearly always won, as he would invent new cusswords to call the mules each morning, and I would stop my harnessing to listen to him. And he would always beat me away from the breakfast table, too, as he would never eat more than a couple of eggs, a strip or so of bacon, and four or five hot cakes. But Gager always waited and let me take the lead with my team as we went to the works. That was a custom of the tribe, and Gager wasn't the man to break it. Then over the right-of-way we would ramble, I riding sideways on my near mule, the five others strung out behind; Gager sideways on my near wheeler; Indiana Beaut, the pushcart-skinner, coming then with his six; and the twenty dump-wagon teams beginning to string away from the camp behind us.

Forests of big firs on each side of the right-of-way, the red glow of sunrise shining through the east one, the sky a clean morning blue overhead. Gager singing "Satchel Nose Pete," and I making some harmony in bass tones. The big machine in the end of a new cut. Hitch up fast, for Red Grabby is coming up on his single-footing mule. Indiana Beaut is on the pushcart, Gager is on the platform, I am on the high-seat, unwinding my slasher from its stock. The dump wagons are waiting. "Let's go!" Red Grabby shouts. Whr-r-r-ack! Whr-r-r-ack! Whr-r-r-ack! Whr-r-r-ack! Twice the slasher cracks out on a line over the leaders, twice it cracks in twists over

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the wheelers' backs. I start the machine team in Paddy the Devil's finest style.

Around and around and around; "Yay!" when a wagon pulls under the elevator, "Hi!" when the wagon is filled, strain on the lines to keep the twelve at a steady gait, jiggle the lines for a straight furrow, crack the slasher for more speed; and this cut for the new railroad goes down a solid foot a day.

Of course supper was always the finest time of the day for me. No misery had ever hurt my appetite a particle, and one never will. Fingers Clark wasn't with Leydens' any more, but they had a cook who was just as good, a team hand called T Bone Slim. I did like the way he cooked T bone steaks—always tender steer meat here. Slim fried them to a rich brown outside, but he left the fat slices a warm, juicy red inside. He peppered his steaks good; and I did like to sit with my eyes shut, chewing slowly, the hot juice of the meat just oozing down my throat, and the pepper making it tingle along just right. Then, to put in a big forkful of mashed potatoes rich with butter, and a little bite of pickle one time, and a little bite of cheese the next time, for flavoring, and to chew it all around what was left of the steak, and to follow about every three mouthfuls down with a draft of creamy, steaming coffee—this was living, I can tell you. Then, after a couple of big T bones and the trimmings, to tackle a quarter of an apple pie, sirupy and cinnamon-flavored, and to finish it; and to tackle a chocolate layer cake a foot high, and to finish three whacking big pieces of that; and to wash all this down with another fine cup of coffee—this was living some more. Then, to go out puffing on a mellow old-fashioned long-stemmed corncob, enjoying such a splendid warm, stuffed feeling inside, to stretch out on my bunk and watch the smoke curl up and listen to the drone of talk in the tent, if this wasn't good living, then there never was such a thing.

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I used to look over at Gager, when I was resting on my bunk, and say: "Solid comfort. Satisfied." I oughtn't to have said it, because I knew that for some reason he didn't like it, but that was the way I felt and I couldn't help myself.

After a while everybody would liven up; and then stories, jokes and songs would go around the circle; and then there would be card games and the talk would gradually quiet down until the team hands began to roll in.

About ten days after Gager came I started rambling over to the little town that was a mile and half up the right-of-way, tramping it with Indiana Beaut, just as we had done before Gager came.

Indiana Beaut was a team hand about my own age. He was slim and dark and handsome; he had a fine pale complexion, white teeth, black eyes and eyebrows, and a mop of black hair that was almost as thick and wavy as my yellow one. He was a serious-going lad, and he had been taking life about as miserably as I had. There was no saloon and not a single pool room in this town, and few of the other team hands ever went over to it, but Beaut and I would hike that three miles very often of a night, just to pass the time away.

We never did much but hike around the streets for a while and then tramp back to camp. To see the town girls was what we went over for, of course, but neither one of us would admit it. We would look at them as they came to the churches on prayer-meeting nights, and we would stare through the windows of the drug store when high-school boys and girls were drinking milk shakes at the soda fountains. Both of us really wanted to go in and join them, but we never would. The team hands would have laughed us out of the tribe if we had drunk milk shakes with high-school kids and the story had got out on us.

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Well, after I began to get used to Gager I started to run more with Indiana Beaut again, and Gager would look at us as we started out and say: "The days will tell, Appanoose Jim, the days will tell." And then I'd grin and tell him to go on, and Beaut and I would ramble to town, look the girls over, and come back to camp feeling gloomy and restless and discontented. Then I'd roll in, have a good sleep, and feel like the burly machine-skinner I was until I got another one of those lonesome, sickening spells.

When a month of driving the machine team had gone by I found that the job was beginning to bear down on me. It wasn't new, exciting and strange so much any more. I got to noticing the jerking and weaving of the high-seat, I felt tired of the eternal jiggling and straining on the lines, and it began to feel like real labor when the mules lazed down and I had to swarm over them with the slasher. I didn't think I was slacking up, but one warm afternoon I was jerked out of a half-doze by a shout from Red Grabby: "Come on with 'em, you on the high-seat!" I looked up and saw him giving me a crooked arm from the bank of the cut. I looked back and saw a string of six wagons behind the elevator. And I heard Gager say:

"The days will tell, Appanoose Jim, the days will tell."

And they did. We stopped to change plowpoints one afternoon, and I got down to help Gager unbolt the old one. As he took the wrenches out of the jockey box, Gager waved his free hand towards the West.

"Farewell, little job," he said. "Yonder a ship goes South. She steams for a scene of heroic labor. I leave to-morrow for the bay city. The Golden Gate, then, and the Canal! Panama! What is the word to you, Appanoose Jim?"

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He swung down on one knee beside the big plow and stared up at me. I looked down at him for a full minute without saying anything. I felt suddenly small and weak, and it seemed like I wasn't half Gager's size, though I was certainly thirty pounds more of a man than he was. And I felt like a kid, too, so much so that I was ashamed of myself. I got a feeling for all the world like the one I used to have whenever my uncle would drive away to town, leaving me alone on the homestead to take care of the stock, and I a-knowing that he'd get drunk and not be back until early morning and that I'd have to shiver by myself and listen to the coyotes howl out in the sagebrush. And when I got that feeling I knew I was going to go along with Gager unless he set his foot down mighty hard against it.

"I'm quittin', too, then," I said.

"A brave, brawny burly on a wide, high-seat—isn't that life enough for you, Appanoose Jim?"

"I guess I ain't quite old enough for it, Gager," I said humbly. "It's tirin' me out."

"Come along, little one."

Gager tucked his head down then and went to unbolting the plowpoint. And I felt so good and free when he said I could come I wanted to turn a string of summersets around the machine. But I didn't. I was still a high-seat team hand.

The hours just dragged along until night. And for once I was too excited to eat more than half a real meal. Indiana Beaut came out of the cook tent behind me. He had a serious, important look on his handsome face as I turned toward him.

"I hate to do it, but I'm leavin' you, old-timer," he said.

"You're a fool, Beaut," I told him. "Why, I'm quittin' myself. Maybe Grabby wouldn't think you

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had the muscle for it, but he might give you a chance on the high-seat."

"To hell with the high-seat! I'm goin' to Panama with Gager!"

"*You're* goin' to Panama with Gager? Why, Beaut, *I'm* goin' to Panama with Gager!"

"Like hell you are! He told me just before supper he was takin' *me!*"

"And he told me *I* was goin' early this afternoon."

"Aw, hell."

"Aw, hell, yourself."

We went to see Gager about it.

"You're both going towards the sun," said Gager.

And that was all there was to it.

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XIV

GAGER and Beaut and I rode the cushions to Portland the next morning. A steerage ticket to Frisco was only five dollars on the coastwise steamers, so Gager had decided to travel by water. We steamed down through the Columbia River fogs that night, and at daylight we were bouncing over one of the rowdiest pieces of water a ship ever tackled, where the big river rolls into the Pacific Ocean.

The fog was high as we hit the waves, and the sky and the ocean were both a dreary gray. Gager had routed Beaut and me out early, and we'd had a couple of good snorts apiece from his bottle. Then we'd made for the cookhouse, where I ate an unusually hearty breakfast. When I went upstairs to the top floor Beaut and Gager were already as far as they could get into the front corner of the steamer. Beaut and three or four other men were sitting on a big pile of rope. Gager was standing right in the corner where the two walls of the ship came together, his right hand resting on the top of that wall, his left hand resting on the other one. His hat was in his right hand, his mackinaw collar was up around his neck, and his black hair was streaming back in the wind.

Out in the misty gray ahead we could see the waters heaving in monster waves. We were hitting the bar. I looked back over my shoulder. A thick column of black smoke was rolling out of the stack, but the wind soon tore it into rags and shreds that quickly faded out against the white bank of fog behind us. I got a sinking feeling for a minute and wished I hadn't come. I'd

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been doing mighty good there in Leydens' camp, and I'd been a fool to let kid feelings get the best of me—hr-s-s-swash—hrr-s-s-swash—what in thunder was that noise along the ship's side? A little dash of wet spray stung my cheek. I felt myself swaying to hold a balance. Gager seemed to rise above me; then he went away down, and I saw the line of a gray ridge of water above his head. We were bucking the rowdy waves of the Columbia River Bar!

"Hod damn! Beaut, we're on the old ocean!" I yelled, fetching him a joyful wallop on the back.

But Beaut wasn't excited about it. He just looked up with a solemn, kind of disgusted glance that made me think he might be insulted, until I saw the others on the rope pile were looking solemn and disgusted too. I supposed the dismal gray weather had made them gloomy, so I stepped up beside Gager, who was taking it fine. He had the wild fire in his black eyes now which I had seen that night when we left Shoshone with Paddy the Devil.

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea," Gager swung his hat out towards the foaming rollers. "A wind that follows fast. Ships may change, but the soul of the sailor stays the same. I can shut my eyes, little one, and hear the drowsy music of waves parting at the bow, and I can believe that I am on a ship of old, and that you are a sailor of old at my side. Say that the machine is on the water. I do not care. In gray day or black night I can stand here and listen to the snore of the forefoot, and for me the soul of other days recurs. Ere this voyaging is done I shall see horizons as they were seen by Magellan's men. I shall stand in the place and know the dreams of his lookouts. There is never a Magellan in my mind, little one; I am only among the men who toiled with his ropes and sails! I, too, am a toiler of fortune, Appanoose

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Jim! I want but the bread and salt of adventure. I'll not ask for its wine."

It wasn't what Gager said that stirred me up so much; it was mainly the deepness of his voice, the flash of his eyes, and the waves of his hand that made his words sound so fine; and I was excited, too, by the heaving of the ship, which was beginning to creak and groan, and by the gray rollers out ahead, all splotched with white foam. Just as he finished speaking the ship plowed into a regular boomer, and part of it ripped over the front of the boat and gave us all a shower bath. I let out a yell and slapped Gager on the back.

"You're right, Gager," I said. "This is certainly a fine excitin' life."

I expected him to start another oration then, but to my surprise he had got the same kind of a solemn, disgusted look on his face that Beaut and the others showed. And then he sighed one of the saddest and mournfulest sighs I had ever heard in my life.

"Why, Gager," I said. "What is the matter with you?"

"Oh," he said, in a weak and trembly voice, "oh, the weary weight of this unintelligible world!"

He groaned when he said that and looked so pale around the gills that I was really scared. I started to yell at Beaut, but he and all the others were gone—all but one, and he was leaning over the side of the ship and looking down at the water in such an interested way I didn't want to disturb him. I tried to take Gager by the arm, but he shoved me away, and then he bowed himself down over the wall of the ship like he was stricken by an awful grief. I was terribly bothered for a minute, as his shoulders began to heave like he was having a fit of crying, and then I was greatly relieved, for I saw that all that ailed him was being sick at the stomach. I held

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his head for him, just like I would for a man who had been drinking too much, and then I half-carried him downstairs to his bunk. I shoved him into it, and he turned his face to the wall and lay like a dead man. And then I saw that Beaut had got sick at the stomach, too, and was looking dead to the world in his bunk. And so was everybody else in the steerage.

Well, we were two days and nights on the water, and I was never so lonesome in my life. I never got the least bit sick at the stomach; in fact, the salt air helped my appetite marvelously, and I must have eaten ten dollars' worth of grub on the trip, after I got acquainted with one of the flunkies.

The only amusement I had on the trip was playing seven-up and arguing with him when he was off shift. He was crazy about the life of a sailor, and at first he tried to look down on me and laugh because I called different things on the ship by their right names, instead of paying any attention to his sailor slang. But I soon put him in his place. I told him what a free and wild life a hobo team hand led, and I plainly showed him how a ship was no better than a prison; but this sailor lad liked to argue too well ever to admit the plain truth about anything. We had it up and down, between our games of seven-up. When he was working I'd tramp around the top floor of the ship and get so tired of looking out at the gray rolling water, which seemed more mournful and lonesome than a sagebrush desert, and I'd get to thinking then of all the bad luck that had happened to me, and I'd feel more restless and gloomy and discontented than I ever had felt, and I'd go downstairs and look at Gager and Beaut resting so quiet and calm in their bunks, and I'd wonder why in thunder I couldn't have got sick at the stomach and taken the trip in that easy way, too. But I never have been sick at the stomach, and I guess I never will be.

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Gager and Beaut got well amazingly quick after we hit the smooth water of Frisco Bay. They looked sort of pale and worn, like they had been on a hard blow-in, but Gager's spirit was blazing up again as soon as the row of docks showed up below the buildings on the hills.

"She takes her cargo there," said Gager. "Let us look for a steamer in white. It needs a bright, white boat to take us towards the sun. Do you yet yearn for the southward voyage, little one?"

"Not if you're goin' to be sick at the stomach all the time, Gager," I said. "I never did see such a lonesome place as the ocean. But I'll go on to Panama, if you say so."

"And you, my son?" said Gager to Indiana Beaut.

But Beaut wasn't ready to talk sense yet.

"Ow!" was all he said. "Foo!"

"The days tell," said Gager. "The spirit falters, the flesh is weak."

Gager didn't say any more until we were off the boat and were drinking steam beer in a waterfront saloon.

"I have seen my ship," he said, as he set his empty glass down on the bar. "And I have business on hand. But first we shall eat. Then you two explore the town. We meet here at eight o'clock."

After we had eaten a hearty breakfast, Indiana Beaut was himself again, and we tramped up Market Street together very joyfully. The first pleasure I had was from the Frisco air; it had a smell to it that made me want to take in a chestful at every breath; and it seemed to tingle right on into my blood, making me want to just prance it up the street.

"Say, she sure is wonderful, ain't she?" said Beaut suddenly.

"She sure is," I said, thinking he meant the feel of the air, the look of the tall buildings and the busy life up

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Market Street, and was speaking of Frisco generally. "I've never seen a town that appealed to me so right off the jump."

"Town, nothin'!" Beaut snapped. "I was talkin' of this girl right ahead."

She was pretty, for a fact. The way she was dressed looked like a million dollars. I took a good look at her as we passed. I thought she smiled, and I suddenly felt warm and looked away.

"She's too fancy for a man like you or me," I said.

"I bet I'd look good enough for her if I had on a different rig from this mackinaw and overalls. If I had on a blue suit, a white collar and a red necktie," said Beaut. "Yes, sir, boy; if I could have me some yeller shoes and socks and a green crush hat like young scissor bills wears, I bet I could have a fancy girl, too."

"You'd look noble among the team hands then, wouldn't you? What do you think Gager'd say if he was to hear you make a crack like that?"

"I wasn't sayin' I wanted to, did I? I was just sayin' what I could do if I did want to. I'm as good a team hand as you are, Appanoose."

"You've never been on a high-seat yet," I came back at him.

That put him in his place and he didn't say any more until we got among the team hands on Howard Street.

We met up with Google Eye Murphy, Liver Lip Red and Jail House Whitey right off the bat, and we started to perform. Beaut and I both had fair stakes, and we passed around a few dollars and bought a few rounds of drinks. I gave the gang the first news of Gager they had heard in a long time. And I wasn't bashful about telling them that I was a high-seat man, either, though I forgot to tell them that the job had bore down on me until I was sick of it. That would have spoiled the good time we were having. I had just got through demon-

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strating how superior my way of holding a set of lines was to the thumb-and-finger style, when Beaut hauled me to one side.

"Gager told us to see the town," he said, "and we'd better do it."

Well, I'd forgotten all about that, and while I hated to stop spending my money with the gang and showing them how to handle a twelve-up mule outfit, I knew that we ought to do what Gager told us to; so Beaut and I ducked.

We spent the rest of the day sight-seeing; and if we didn't learn all about Frisco's hotels and stores, it was because girls were always getting in our way when we went to look at them.

We were sober when we met Gager, but he was pretty well primed for the night.

He was quiet for a long time. He led us on another march up Market Street, which was blazing now with the most beautiful lights I had ever seen in my life. He kept sizing Beaut and me up as we walked along, but he didn't say a word.

He turned up a branch street at last, and we climbed silently along together until we reached a spot where we could look out over the bay. Gager stopped us there.

"This place shines for me with the sentiment of a pure memory," he said. "Quiet, lads, for a while."

The lights of Market and the other busy streets blazed below us. There were rows of moving lights out in the darkness of the bay, where ferries steamed along. And beyond them were large clusters of lights, each cluster being a far town. The stars were coming out brightly. There was a cloud of white fog slowly drifting in from the ocean, and a searchlight on an island made an eery glow on this cloud every time it swung around.

"Once I was young and lonely." Gager spoke in a

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low voice. "I walked this street in the time. At such an hour as this. I was sailing ere dawn for the Solomons. I was not the toiler of fortune that night, but the lonely young laborer.

"She stood by yonder door. She glanced up at me and I saw starlight in her eyes. I snatched a kiss. She would have flown like a frightened bird. I whispered: 'I leave this port ere dawn, and never return again.' There was a pitying caress from her soft lips and little hand. I went smiling away.

"I stood here and for a happy hour I read the romance of the stars. Here I enjoyed my last sentiment of youth. I was too young for the lusty life. I should have waited awhile. Take warning, my lads."

The way Gager told his story gave me a wonderfully exalted feeling, and it made me feel sad and wishful, too. I wanted to speak confidential with him, but I wouldn't for the world have let Beaut know I was weak in any way. He didn't say anything, either. Gager sighed.

"It is enough," he said. "Down to the racket and glare of the Coast."

And we turned back down the hill.

Laborers who have never been anywhere talk about the old-time Barbary Coast of Frisco as though it was a terribly rowdy and wicked place. They try to claim that it was worse than the old-time Dublin Gulch in Butte, Montana, and the old-time Happy Hollow in San Pedro, Southern Cal's biggest port. But the only reason in the world that the Barbary Coast got such a bad name among laborers was because so many Methodist immigrants came into Frisco and lost their religion down on the Coast, and then yelled their heads off about its wickedness in the newspapers. The Barbary Coast looked pretty tame to me, after some of the places I'd been in since I was fifteen. It was bigger and noisier than Portland's North End, Seattle's Yesler Way and Butte's

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Dublin Gulch, but it was really a nice, pleasant place.

Most of it was on about three blocks of a narrow street. These blocks were jammed with dance halls and saloons on both sides. There was a glaring sign over every "hell hole," as the Methodist immigrants taught the Frisco people to call the Coast dance hall, and the street was bright as day. Both the sidewalks and the pavement were crowded with men. The crowds and the noise and the lights excited me; I felt like I used to on a circus night in my Idaho town. We were only moseying, and for a little while I just gaped and marveled. So did Beaut. But Gager had his chin tucked down and wasn't paying attention to anything. We stopped and looked on when we came to The Green Front, a nigger hell hole. Then we moved on to the Thalia hell hole, and stopped to watch the crowd there. A ballyhooer in a Texas hat and a long coat was out in front.

"Come in, gents! Come in!" he yelled at us. "You keep standin' there and somebody'll use you for a hitchin' post!"

When I heard that old gag I laughed and came back to myself again. I remembered that I was a high-seat team hand and thought of some of the *real* hell holes I had seen and told myself that most of the crowd were certainly scissor bill city laborers, and I felt quite superior again.

There were many Navy sailors in the crowd, I saw now, and quite a few common sailors, too. Here and there were men who might be out-and-out yeggs, pimps and gamblers, and there were some dirty, mean, poor-spirited looking creatures who could be nothing else than cokeheads or bread-and-butter johns. But the crowd was mostly laborers.

When Gager turned into the Thalia hell hole, I followed with a swagger, and my head held high.

A band was blazing out a warm tune from a stage in

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the back of the hell hole. A big dance floor was under a regular blinding glare of white light. A long bar was at one side of it. Here near the door were tables and chairs. Sailors, yeggs and laborers were dancing in honky-tonk style out on the floor. Some of the girls were in tights. Others were dressed like dolls. Some had on regular women's clothes. But every one was painted up like a new barn. When a dance was finished the girls' partners would take them to the bar or the tables and buy drinks. That was all the hell hole there was to it. It was really pretty tame, and I can't for the life of me see how a man with a religion that works as strong as the Methodist one does could lose it in a circus sideshow like the Barbary Coast. But most all the Methodist men that came to Frisco did.

Gager took Beaut and me to a table and ordered some beer. And when we had downed the first drink and he had talked for a few minutes I forgot the hell hole and everything and everyone in it. I hadn't room for anything but my own personal feelings. For Gager let Beaut and me know right away that he was going to ditch us, and that he had brought us here to tell us so. I was terribly hurt and shocked at first, but Gager talked me around. Beaut, I honestly thought, seemed relieved.

Gager talked mostly to me. He spoke sadly at first of Wallace the Goldfish and of that girl he had seen just once up on the hill, saying how different he might be now if he had only done different with his life when it was young. It was always hard for me to understand Gager, but I made out that when he was a kid he'd been sweet on a girl like I was once on Isis Dowell, and had come to grief, too. And he'd had nothing to do with any but bad women ever since. They made him disgusted with himself, like they do any man.

"Behold them here," said Gager. "Speak of them

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kindly as ladies on the loose. Say they are as good as yourself, if you will; but that is the moralist's point, and it means nothing. They know only a commerce of flesh; youth traffics with them for kisses and pays not only silver but the romance of its desire. Here are adventurers' loves, my lads, and masks of romance for old laborers and old others who would play clowns to love for an hour. But you are youth.

"I have a dream for you, Appanoose Jim; as for you, Beaut, I know your way. You hear me, little one! I see in you a promise. I may meet you again as the golden shadow of the great dark devil. You have his brawn and his fighting eye, but you are unripe yet. There is a time of women and work ahead for you, little one; that time is not to be with me. When the substance of the man in you takes shape, we'll see what shadow falls. I'll meet you again if you reach my hope. Otherwise—nothing matters."

"You mean you're ditchin' us, don't you, Gager?" I said.

"I'm saving souls," said Gager, the light of a smile in his black eyes. "Not often do I enjoy playing the evangel. *Cameradoes!* Hear me again!"

It was then that Gager went on to tell Beaut and me all about ourselves and why we had been so gloomy and restless and discontented. His idea was that it would be a shame for us to go to Panama; what we needed for a while, he intimated, was to go down to Loss for the winter, learn city life and get acquainted with some girls. Well, I took it this way: Gager didn't think we were old enough to go to Panama with him; he'd decided he didn't want to be bothered with us; and he was talking to let us down easy and not hurt our feelings. But Beaut wasn't wise enough to figure things out like I could; he seemed to take Gager seriously and acted like

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he was very much pleased to take Gager's advice. I acted like I was, too; I certainly wasn't going to butt in where I wasn't wanted.

"It's royal raiment for you, my lads," said Gager. "Royal raiment, plain jobs and simple girls for a while. On one path only may youth march towards the sun. The hot steel of adventure is not for your hands; the masks of romance are not for your hearts. *Allons!* A southbound passenger leaves the yards in an hour. It is you for a Pullman's trucks."

"All right, Gager," I said, "if that's the way you feel about it."

"A last drink, and then farewell, little one," said Gager.

A grand change came over him when we were drinking the next beer. He shoved his hat back, squared his shoulders, and there was a devilish dance in the light of his eyes as he stared out over the dance floor. A plump old girl in tights wiggled up and put her hand around Gager's neck. He snatched it away.

"Get out, damn you," he growled, "or I'll kick a lung out of you!"

She told him to go to hell, but she got mighty quick, just the same.

"That slim Spaniola in green is my ticket," said Gager. "Down in the tropics I'll meet her kind."

Her smile and all the rest of her face seemed to have been painted on, but she wasn't really such a bad looker. The Spaniola sat down by Gager, and he waved his hand at us.

"Gager dons the mask," he sang out. "On with the dance! Drunk at dawn, but I'll be sailing through the Golden Gate. A toiler of fortune. Craning a big-tooth shovel on the grandest canal job that ever was. Farewell, *cameradoes.* So long. Get you on towards the sun!"

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"So long, Gager. Be good to yourself, old-timer," said Beaut, shaking hands.

I said the same thing as I shook hands, and told Gager he might send a letter to some of the hangouts in Loss. Beaut asked him to write up a story once in a while.

"My stories are written on airs," said Gager. "They dissolve in the wine of the sun."

And without looking at us again he whirled the Spaniola away into a rowdy dance.

Beaut and I rambled out of the hell hole and caught a car for the yards. A switchman showed us a lay, and while we were waiting in the dark, Beaut said:

"I didn't want to go to Panama anyhow."

Well, I thought of all the miseries I had gone through being a kind of adventurer up in the sagebrush country, and I thought of how I might get rid of all my gloom and restlessness and discontent if I got a plain city job and a real girl for a while, like Gager had intimated I should; and I thought of how much better it was to be hoboing it safely and comfortably here in Cal than to be out on the lonesome ocean, sailing to a wild, foreign place; I decided finally that Gager was right, and in my mind I agreed heartily with Beaut. But I said:

"Beaut, I'm ashamed to hear you talk that way. What would the team hands think?"

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BOOK II

WOMEN AND WORK

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XV

WORK in the city way. Two weeks of driving dump wagons in a home guard camp near Loss. Saturday night. Indiana Beaut, Looking Glass Tex and Appanoose Jim all dolled up in new second-hand suits. All in crush hats and yellow shoes. Wearing white collars —and neckties! Buying seats in one of the swellest theaters in town! I couldn't hardly believe it was real, but it certainly was.

It was all Beaut's fault. I'd never have gone back on the team hands that way by myself. But I couldn't keep him from taking a job in that home guard camp, and I couldn't keep him from listening to the home guards' talk about girls and shows and trips to the beaches, and I couldn't bring myself to desert him, either. If I'd been by myself on this Saturday night I'd have gone straight to the team hand hangouts; but Beaut declared that he was going to get some fancy clothes and see a real show first; I knew how stubborn he was and that there was no use trying to talk him out of it, so I'd humored him and bought a fine rig myself. And I couldn't help but feel glad that I did, after I'd put it on and taken a look at myself in the old Jew's mirror. Looking Glass Tex, the only other team hand in the home guard camp, had come along with us and bought an outfit, too. He was about thirty years old and had seen several plays one winter back in Shy. He took command of the party after we started for the theater.

Tex paraded us into a big lobby that appeared so marvelously showy to me and had so many people in it who looked like the highest society that I wanted

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to run. But Beaut and Tex marched on bravely to the ticket window, and I vowed I wouldn't show cold feet if they didn't.

It was about time for the play to begin, and we couldn't get three good seats together in the orchestra.

"Three box seats, then," said Tex, twisting his mustache in a careless way, as though buying box seats was nothing at all. He had started going it and there wasn't any limit for him. I didn't know what box seats were, and I don't think Beaut did either, but we forked over a dollar apiece without a word.

Well, it will be a long time before I forget my first five minutes in that box. It was a lower one, and I was shoved into a chair next to the rail. And there I was, perched up close to the stage, in full view of the audience; and it appeared that there were about seventeen thousand people in it, and I'd have sworn every last blamed one of them was looking at me and laughing. No one was, of course; I just imagined it; but how I did squirm and sweat for a while! Then Tex leaned over and whispered:

"Know what?" he said. "I bet everybody out there thinks we're rich ranchers or mine-owners or something like that from the desert country, we're all browned up so!"

That might be true. We weren't in our overalls any longer, we were dressed for any place in life. I looked down at my coat and on down at my pants, which were so smooth except for the fine creases along the legs, and I thought that this brown suit with thin red stripes must be a real sign of prosperity. I felt better; and when I looked out at the audience again I had my nose up.

Nearly all the seats were full now. The roof curved away up high and the lights in it shed a soft shine on the people below. The men in every row appeared

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about the same. All along there would be dark shapes and light shapes and pale spots above them; and the shapes would be men's suits, and the spots would be their faces. But the women were different. Every one of them stood out from the men. Their dresses were all in different styles and colors, each woman had fixed her hair in her own particular way; you had to look at each one separately; and sometimes you would see a lovely little blonde, with lace around her throat, who would make you look until your eyes ached.

I was so interested in a blonde like this that I hadn't noticed an orchestra come out from under the stage and take seats to the right of our box. Then the sweetest violin music rose up, a cornet broke in with some strong, rich toots, a snare drum rattled like hail on a tin roof, and a long blast from a trombone just about lifted me from my chair. Then three or four booming groans rolled over from a monster fiddle and seemed to squeeze me right down again; and those instruments just spread themselves for about five minutes; and I had an exciting time of it trying to listen to all of them at once. It wasn't the kind of band music that makes you want to rear up and march; the tune kept changing so much that it made me feel positively queer, and I didn't know whether to like it or not. But the violins certainly sounded sweet and kind.

The music stopped and all the lights went out except the ones that shone on the curtain. And the play began. I had forgotten to look through my program, but I soon found that the play was an English one. An English play away over here in America, with dukes and earls and their women walking around in their splendid clothes right in front of my eyes! At first I was struck all of a heap. Then I got interested in the story and forgot everything else.

The hero was a man who had come down from Mars

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to make an English lord be more kind and Christianlike to the poor people who worked for him and rented rooms in his hotels. I was ignorant then and didn't know where Mars was, but that didn't bother me in liking the play. I forgot my bright clothes, Beaut and Tex, the audience, the lovely little blonde, the violins—everything but the stage and the actors; and to me that was really England, and the people were really dukes and their women and a man from the Mars country. In another act the poor English working men and women were on the stage in their ragged work clothes. They never got to dress themselves up and go to a show, you bet! They were *so* natural and pitiful I blamed near cried. And when the duke broke down and wept and prayed for mercy on him, a poor sinner who had been taken down in his pride and had lost the woman he loved, I prayed right with him. I never had felt more religious, not even at Methodist prayer meeting in Idaho. And then when the duke took all his poor renters unto him as brothers and sisters, and the hero went back satisfied to the Mars country, and the duke's woman made up with him again, I felt so glad over the beautiful ending that I wanted to shout like a Methodist brother. But I didn't. The curtain came down too quick; and there I was again, in my new second-hand suit, in the box with Beaut and Tex, and two of the finest hours I had ever known were all gone by.

It hadn't seemed like two hours, or even half an hour, to me. Every act had shone up and faded out before I could realize that time was passing at all, and between acts I had been in a sort of a trance that even the music didn't break into. It was all over now. The audience was done with its clapping and the aisles were choked with people moving slowly out. Beaut and Tex were leaving the box. I heaved a big sigh and got up after them. Well, this show was done, but there'd be plenty

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more, and I swore then and there that I'd never miss a week at this theater while I was in Loss. There couldn't be any other pleasure like it.

That's always the way it is the first time you taste one of the few true-gold pleasures of life. Grown people laugh about puppy love; but, just the same, there's never another girl who seems as angelic and lovely as the first one. Your first man's job; that's the one you remember with the finest thrill. And that's the way it was with me and this play about the man from the Mars country; I've seen many a play since that was considered far and away its superior, but never one that pleased me so much. The first taste is always the richest one.

I couldn't have felt nobler and kinder than I did as I followed Beaut and Tex out into the street. My suit looked so good to me and the life of Loss had such wonderful promise that I was sure my troubles were all over now and that I'd never be restless or discontented again. I was a fool to think so, but it was fine while it lasted. I wasn't saying a word. I just walked along enjoying my thoughts until the three of us reached the corner where the saloon was. Looking Glass Tex wanted to lead us in for some beer, and I was agreeable, but Indiana Beaut hung back.

"No," he said solemnly. "I won't go in there. I've come to the conclusion I won't drink no more to-night. Maybe never."

And he looked like he meant it. Tex appeared very much surprised.

"What's got into you?" he said. "Sick?"

"No," said Beaut. "As I watched the duke doin' better in the last of that play I come to the conclusion I ought to do better myself. That's all."

"So *that*'s what got into you! Well, I never see the like! Here we go to a play to enjoy ourselves, and the way you enjoy it is to make up your mind you won't

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drink no more beer. I s'pose the next thing you'll declare you're even too good to work with team hands, and you'll go out for a scissor bill job?"

"I won't stand for no lecksherin'!" Beaut flared up. "I said I was goin' the way I wanted to go, no matter what was thought about it. So don't you go to preachin' at me!"

"Oh, you're batty." Looking Glass Tex turned to me. "Come on, Appanoose; let's go perform a little. Not much, maybe; but let's get to feelin' good, anyhow."

I stood and thought a minute. The play hadn't had such a moral effect on me, but I was feeling noble and exalted, and my sympathies were all with Beaut. Tex was old and experienced, and he couldn't be expected to take the play so seriously to heart. I simply wasn't in the humor to go performing with him.

"No," I said. "Just like Beaut, I think I ought to do better."

"Well, may I be fetched to the cookhouse for tripe!" yelled Tex. "I was glad to rig myself out in the finest style and enjoy city life in the city way, but I swear I ain't goin' to turn into a scissor bill altogether! Go your own way then! I'm travelin' it no farther!"

Looking Glass Tex pulled off his necktie, stuck it in his pocket, and tramped on up Main Street without another word. Beaut and I stood silently for awhile, looking at the lights and crowds.

"Let's go eat something," I said finally.

He agreed and we struck across the street and boldly went into a fine restaurant. Neither one of us would have dared to go into such a grand place before we bought our new second hand clothes. The stools at the counter had backs on them, the counter itself was polished oak, the dishes were like the fine china ones I had seen in some homes, and there was a mirror and shelves on the wall back of the counter, which looked as shiny and

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clean as though they were back of a good bar. The waitress wore a white starched apron and cap; and she made such a wonderfully sweet and bright appearance that I hardly dared to stare at her. I ordered a T bone and the trimmings, but Beaut only took a ham sandwich.

"I feel too good to be hungry," he said.

There wasn't a sign of a tough twist to Beaut's mouth now; and with his solemn expression he looked like he might have just stepped out of Sunday school. It was hard to think he had poured down so much whisky as he had when we first met in Portland. There was usually a fiery look in his black eyes; but not now. His thin, handsome nose had been broken once in a fight, but a little bump on it was the only thing about him that would lead anyone to think so here. All of his looks were solemn and kind. Even his black eyebrows, raised a little as they were, had a soft curve to them. A dark curl of hair had fallen from under his hat and was resting very nicely on his pale forehead. Sitting calm now, with none of the tough team hand swagger about him, his suit fitting his slim figure like it had been tailored for it, I declared to my soul that Indiana Beaut was as handsome as the duke I had seen on the stage that night. I felt like an overgrown farm hand beside him.

Still, it was me the bright little waitress kind of smiled at when she brought up our orders. I stuck a fork into the thick steak, watched the red juice bubble up around the tines, let my gaze saunter over the sprig of parsley, over the French fried potatoes, which looked like a heap of brown quarter-moons on their plate, and back up to the waitress. She was smiling enough now to show her teeth, and her look *was* for me, or else I was seeing crooked. I was sure I was mistaken, for how could any girl look at me with Beaut around? Two or three smart cracks came to my tongue, but I didn't have the nerve to say them. I just said: "I'll have coffee to drink, and you

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might bring me some chocolate cake, too." Then I looked right down again. I hadn't quite learned yet what an eye most girls have for powerful shoulders. And mine already looked that way.

Beaut minced away so delicately at his ham sandwich that I felt ashamed to tie into my T bone with all my appetite. So I ate it delicately, too, though it was rich and juicy and hard to go slow on. Beaut looked more and more solemn as he ate away. He didn't say a word until he had finished his delicate eating. Then:

"I'm goin' to be a mechanic. I'm goin' to learn me a trade," Beaut said, in a soft and low but determined voice. "Yes, sir, boy; I've fully made up my mind to that right here and now."

You could have knocked me over with a feather! I didn't know what to say. I couldn't have said it if I did. To quit being a team hand for the winter, to dress up and perform like a city laborer for a few months, was understandable to me; for I had decided on this myself. And I even had a dim idea of keeping it up, on account of the fine times I could have seeing plays. But I certainly had never thought of doing anything else but work with mules or horses. If Beaut had said that he was going to get out of the camp and drive one of the city trucking outfits, handling a four- or six-horse rig, it wouldn't have surprised me so much. But to be a mechanic! A dirty, drudgery job like that! The idea was beyond me.

"Yes, sir," Beaut went on quietly. "When I was a kid my old man and my three uncles would talk to me by the hour about goin' into the shops. They were all strucsheral iron workers, and they called it a dog's life and dangerous as hell. But they couldn't see anyone not wantin' to work with iron or steel; and they said the only thing for me was to be a mechanic, safe and comfortable in a good shop. They urged me and urged

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me until I got sick of their urgin' and went out hoboin'. But now I've come to the conclusion they knew what they was talkin' about. I'm goin' to mind them at last; and maybe marry and settle down; and have a little home with vines over the front porch; and some little kiddies to meet me when I come home from the shops. That's the conclusion I've come to, and I mean it."

Well, I actually blushed to hear Indiana Beaut talking in such a soft way. I knew most any other team hand would have felt like killing him. But somehow I couldn't help but sympathize with him. He went on talking, between sips of his coffee, while I delicately chewed down the rest of my steak. Beaut certainly had a powerful imagination, and he made such an agreeable picture of a mechanic's life at work in the shops, and at home with a sweet little wife and kiddies, that I almost wished I could be a mechanic myself. But I couldn't, as I had no knack at all for tools. I could have been a butter-maker, but I knew too well how greasy and sloppy the work was. I'd never tackle it again now. But I was determined myself to do better from now on, I told Beaut; I'd find something nicer than teaming to work at, I said, and we'd keep on together, encouraging one another in being good, kind, respectable city workingman. No more drinking, fighting and gambling, but just clean, calm, honest living for us. Doing better together; helping one another along; that was our ticket.

We shook hands on it and got up to pay our bill and go back to camp. I couldn't remember when I had felt more decent and clean in my mind. I even thought about chewing no more and holding myself down to the pipe. Well, everything might have been all right if we hadn't eaten so slowly and delicately and had left five minutes sooner. But something is always bound to happen whenever you get sure

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that you are on the right road and start going your best. I've never known it to fail.

We had just paid the cashier, when I noticed two sailors bringing a couple of girls into the restaurant. One of the sailors looked familiar; and I stared curiously at him for a couple of seconds, wondering if I had ever known him. And at last I remembered where I had seen his face. The sailor was Frank Dariel! I felt like a chunk of ice had been shoved against the pit of my stomach, and then the ice changed to fire and I felt myself blaze all over. I never stopped to consider, I never let a fear hold me back; I just went after the skunk with both fists and both feet and a growl.

My first wallop caught him squarely over the eye and knocked him against a table in one of the booths along the wall. He shoved himself right up, the most dazed, bewildered look on his face; he started a yell, and I let him have it again. Flush on the mouth this time. He went down from that pretty wallop. The girls were screaming by now, and I felt the other sailor's claws around my neck. I twisted and jerked, but he had a powerful grip, and before I could break it the skunk was up again and had hit me one in the eye that made the stars just blaze! Bam! A knock in the jaw seemed to jar my teeth loose. The big hands around my throat were shutting off my breath. Then I was suddenly free and tearing into the skunk again, while Beaut and the other sailor battled back against the counter. The skunk appeared to know some boxing, and he pasted me some lovely ones; but when I got him into a clinch and chugged him as Paddy the Devil had taught me, he went down with a wild groan, hugging his stomach with both hands. I was putting the boots to him when I felt a jab in the back. The skunk's girl was after me with a hatpin. I grabbed her arm and ducked under it. Beaut was smashing the other sailor in a clinch between two

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stools. I saw a blue coat and a flash of brass buttons at the door.

"The bulls, Beaut!" I gasped. "Ramble!"

The sailor tried to hang to his coat, but he ripped away; and out into the alley we went as hard as we could peg it. To the right of the kitchen door I spotted a chute that ran down into a cellar. I hauled Beaut to it; we slid down into black darkness and landed on a pile of coal. We heard feet thumping along the alley, a spell of excited talk, and then everything was quiet again. But for about half an hour we hardly dared to breathe; and then Beaut broke loose with as wild a fit of cussing as I had ever heard.

"Blast you down to the hottest holes of the damned! What did you go and start a fight for?" he growled out in a low, hoarse voice. "I was never meanin' better in all my days—and you spoiled it all—you spoiled it all—the whole fine scheme I'd been plannin'! I'll never get back to what I was to-night—I never will, I tell you! May the old Nick himself gouge you and bite you and prong you! What'd you want to start me fightin' for?"

"S-s-s-s-h!" I whispered. "Calm yourself, Beaut. That sailor—well, he insulted me. He insulted me, that was why."

"*How*, in the name of sense?"

Well, I couldn't tell even Indiana Beaut about Isis. As low as I'd been the summer before, something had made me keep her in a secret place that was high and holy.

I had never spoken her name to anyone but Gager. So I just lied now.

"That sailor gave me the insultingest look I ever had in my life," I whispered. "I wouldn't take such a look from an admiral. I don't know why he gave it, but he did, and I vowed I'd make him sorry. But wasn't it a good old fight while it lasted? I wish Tex could have been along."

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I was all stirred up with wild feelings. Beaut was too, for that matter. The difference was that I was enjoying mine, while he was trying to fight his down.

"I had started in to be a decent, respectable mechanic," he complained. "Such a man wouldn't do what we just done. I ought to be ashamed. It makes me mad because I'm not."

I told him he was probably just shaky and that we'd better sneak out now and go somewhere for a drink to steady our nerves. He agreed, though he declared it was a shame to make the fighting worse by drinking; he swore he'd never do either one any more after to-night. So we pulled ourselves up the coal chute and into the alley. We sneaked away in its darkness, dodged across a street, scuttered through the next block; and so on until we reached the hangouts.

We certainly looked tough now. The faces of both of us were bruised up, I had lost my hat, and my coat was streaked with blood, and Beaut's coat was ripped up the back. And we were so full of coal dust that we looked like we had just got off the head end of a passenger. We went to drinking in a corner by ourselves, and talked mighty little. Beaut looked very glum, and I guess I did, too. When the bar closed at midnight we bought a quart of whisky apiece. We got on the wrong street car and were put off away out in the suburbs. We staggered around until daylight, looking for the camp. We drove in just as breakfast was done. And when that Looking Glass Tex saw us, the blamed fool just lay down on the ground in his new second-hand suit and simply rolled and laughed. We felt like killing him.

I got so finally I could laugh at our performance myself. But poor Beaut never did.

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XVI

THE winter days were far behind; March sunshine had followed the February rains; and summer had seen the last of its blazing long days. I was a full-fledged city laborer at last. My muscle and my power with the long lash had put me on the high-seat of the grading machine; I had handled the job like a man; and now I was in command of a star trucking outfit, a six-horse rig belonging to William R. Plunk, the biggest man in town. I had two fine suits of clothes, a grip full of underclothes, shirts, neckties, collars and socks; and I had my pick of four pretty girls whenever I wanted to dress up in my fine clothes and go out for a good time. I never thought of Gager very much any more, but whenever I did I would say to myself: "I certainly wish he could see me now!"

Annie Doane was my first girl in Loss. She was no one else than that blonde waitress who had served Beaut and me that night in the restaurant. I met her, not ten days afterwards, out at the beach and picked her up. I had gone with her pretty steadily during the past year. She would be on days for two weeks, and then on nights for two weeks; and I had got to chasing around with two other girls while she was working nights. At first I would come to the restaurant to see her then, as she was the only one there who knew I had started that rough-house; but as I fell more into the ways of the city laborer, I felt more and more that I had to keep going out somewhere for a good time; and when she found out about the other girls she showed what a sharp tongue she had. I had lied to her quite a bit, to keep her contented,

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but finally I got tired of this game. Especially after I met up with Tiva Fletcher.

One night in December I took Annie Doane out to Echo Park to have a last talk with her. I was through, and I intended to make her understand it. Well, Annie was all set for a pretty battle herself. I had some heavy ammunition for my part, but when we had planted ourselves on a park bench, she got started before I could draw a breath.

"I hope you find yourself able to sleep in a room," said Annie, in that icy voice that used to make me shiver. "How you must miss the fresh air of your tents! But maybe you've slept sometime in a room before. Not knowin' your past history, I can't say, of course."

"Never mind the sarcasm, kiddo," I said. "Who told you I'd moved downtown?"

"You certainly didn't. So long since you've called around I've forgot what your voice even sounded like."

"I asked you who's gabblin' my bizness around. You tell me that."

"Oh, I met Henry Banner on the street about ten days ago. He seemed to think you'd be proud to have people know you were doin' better. How strange you're not!"

"Oh, him," was all I could say just then.

"Henry Banner" was Indiana Beaut's real name. His girl had made him throw his old moniker away. And she had tamed him down in many other ways, too—she and her aunt, Carrie Gleim, together. Carrie was William R. Plunk's old cook. She was retired now and married to a well-known policeman. Annie Doane had made Beaut and I acquainted with her, and with all the relations who lived around her. Carrie had got good jobs for most of her men-folks through William R. Plunk, and maybe she didn't boss all of them around properly!

Annie had got into some kind of women's fuss with

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Carrie, and she hadn't been out to the Gleim place for a long time. Beaut knew I was splitting up with her, too, and he ought to have known enough to have kept his mouth shut about my job. But it was partly my fault; he didn't understand handling women, and I should have told him just how to lie to her. Now I'd have to think fast and hard.

"I s'pose," Annie was saying, "that you're ashamed of workin' for such a big millionaire as William R. Plunk. That's why you haven't been around to tell me."

She gave me a frosty glare, as I made no answer; then she took a wicked kick at some bits of gravel, sniffed a couple of times, and hit out again.

"And it's very likely, you bein' such a strange, strange young man, that you're ashamed of gettin' your fine job through Mr. Plunk's old cook."

That wasn't so, and nothing could have made me more hostile than for someone to intimate that it was.

"I got that job of drivin' a six-horse truck for William R. Plunk purely and simply because my old boss recommended me as the best machine teamster that ever worked for him," I snapped. "Now, you lay off for just two minutes. I have a few things to say to you; and then you can set here and talk all night."

"I'd like to know what you got to say to me."

"I got plenty, all right. You ain't been doin' nothin', have you? Oh, no!"

"Jim, you'd better be careful!"

"Careful, nothin'!" I wasn't in the humor just now to pay any mind to the change in her voice. "Listen, kiddo; you know you're on to playin' quite a few tricks yourself. I don't know how long you been at them; but you do like sailors, don't you? You will smile and flirt with 'em for all get out, any old time, won't you? Oh, they's no use to look *that* way! Blame it, don't you think I got *eyes?* Don't you think I can *see* through

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that restaurant window? Don't you think I know that skunk when I see him? And that after I'd told you about me and the little Idaho girl, too!"

That got her all right, for it was true. It had happened not a week before. I'd have bounced in and cleaned him again; but I wasn't so bitter about it any more, and, besides, I had on a new suit. I had watched him laughing and talking with Annie, his hand over hers on the counter, and she with her head down close to his; then I had passed on, feeling that I didn't have any scruples about breaking up with her now.

"What night was that you saw us?" Annie sort of stammered, the color all out of her face.

"Oh, so there was more nights than one, was they? It might have been any old night that guy's ship was in port, I guess! *What* night! My gosh, you must think I'm a sucker right! And not a week before, I'd let you give me a hard callin' down because I'd gone out a couple of times with that little overall-factory girl! I'm easy, I guess. But you can just forget me now—me and the whole works."

"Jim, I had something to tell you that you'd like to hear real well; but I won't tell you a word now, not one single word. You needn't think I'm goin' to make a fool out of myself by chasin' after you any more. Go on, now, and be proud of yourself."

And she tightened up her little fists and closed her mouth into a thin line that showed she meant what she said.

"All right," I said, getting up from the park bench. "There's nothin' you can say to me that'll talk stronger than what I saw. You want me to see you home?"

"I certainly don't. Beat it. Beat it and be thankful everything came so good for you to ditch me and leave yourself feelin' pure and noble and decent about it. You are so fine and such a gen'leman you ought to feel mighty

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proud of yourself, Jim Turner! No woman but your mother could really appreciate you! Good night!"

I was absolutely in the right, and I knew it; but that plague-goned girl certainly could twist you around and make you feel like a rotten fool. I tramped out of the park, taking a good kick at the turf about every ten steps, taking a swing at the flowers along whenever white blossoms showed up in the dark, swearing to myself at all the women in creation. Finally, instead of going to see Tiva Fletcher, as I had intended, I rode out to Carrie Gleim's place. Indiana Beaut was boarding there now.

Carrie's was always a jolly place to go to. She had two men cousins whose homes were in the block where she lived; and one or the other was always dropping in of an evening for an hour or so, after Jake got home from the police station. One was a carpenter and one was an automobile mechanic, and both had steady jobs with William R. Plunk. Each one had a large family, and the sons were all to have jobs with William R. Plunk when they got out of high school and were ready to go to work.

The women folks seemed to have most of the say in all these families, and Carrie certainly was the shining star in the life of all of them. Her pull with William R. Plunk must have been tremendous. When Beaut had gone to boarding with her she at once went to work to get him a good job with William R. Plunk. First it was decided that he should go to work in the Plunk machine shops, along with the mechanic cousin. Harry, the carpenter cousin, had argued a little for the Plunk building jobs; but Harry wasn't much of a favorite with Carrie, and she didn't care a great deal about carpentering, either. And when she saw that Beaut and Meta, her niece, were getting mighty sweet on each other, she settled all arguments by sending Beaut out with Mike Koestner, Meta's father, to work in one of the new

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William R. Plunk subdivisions. Mike was superintendent over all of Mr. Plunk's cement work; so Beaut had started under him to learn to be a finisher. He was a strip-setter already, and he hoped that in at least two years he would be a full-fledged finisher and married to Meta.

Carrie met me with both hands. That was her way.

"Howdy do, Jim! I guess we ain't glad to see you! How has things been comin' by you in your chob with Mr. Plunk? Fine, I bet you! Well, you don't haf to look no further, now. You won't do no better nowhere. All you got to do iss work and work and keep your health and you will be fixed for the rest of your days. A workin'man don't need to think he can do better anywhere than with our Mr. Plunk. Ain't it right, Harry?"

Carrie had me in the big front room by now. It was all in a rosy glow from a couple of shaded lamps. The brown and red colors of the carpet looked somewhat faded and the green cloth of two easy-chairs and a couch looked a little worn; and the dark gray wall paper with circles of geraniums on it wasn't very fresh; but the brown woodwork and the big oak table and the rockers simply shone. So did the window curtains. They were so white and fresh-looking that it seemed they might have been washed, starched and ironed that very day. There was a cabinet graphophone in one corner, a cupboard of books in another, and there were some very bright pictures on the walls. There wasn't any stove. You didn't need one in Loss very much. Jake was sitting in an easy-chair at the table, and Harry was in a rocker. They were playing cribbage.

"I guess you can make your game three-handed," said Carrie. "I got to wash my dishes yet, and I fix you something to eat. Henry is over to see Meta."

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"You don't need to tell me that," I said; and we all laughed.

I pulled a chair up to the table and sat down, and Carrie started out for the kitchen. She stopped in the door and looked back at me with a stare that always seemed mighty sharp whenever her bright blue eyes did their best on it. Carrie was fat, but she had lots of fine wrinkles around her eyes and mouth and double chins; and these wrinkles would tighten up when she looked this way. She stared a minute now, her chubby red hands resting on the blue-checked gingham apron where it bulged out over her hips, and nodding her head so shrewdly that I could see, when her chin came down, the top of the gray knot of hair on the back of her head.

"You're gettin' sweet on Tiva Fletcher, too, don't you, Jim?" she said. "Well, Tiva's a nice girl, even if she did quit work for Mr. Plunk. I guess I haf to watch for you two now, like I do Henry and Meta. But I thought, Jim, you might bring Tiva over to-night. You don't quarrel, maybe?"

"No, Carrie. And if we did, I wouldn't tell about it."

"So. I guess you're a wise boy, all right. But you look out for these waitress gals, Jim. They haf all got many cute tricks."

"Nobody don't need to worry about me."

"So. Well, you mind what I tell you. You watch."

She was frowning as she went on out to the kitchen. I had made up my mind long ago that Carrie should never get a start handling me.

Jake and Harry were very quiet men and fine to play cards with. Cribbage was a game I always liked; my seat was comfortable; the room was big and pleasant to rest in; and the card game was just what I needed.

We played on for an hour or more, just relaxing our-

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selves over the cards, keeping interested in what would turn up, and making a joke now and then about some lucky play, or some rotten one. I was pretty good at making joking remarks in a friendly way to keep the game livened up a little. Every so often I'd break in with one of these cracks: "You certainly are a hog for luck, if I ever saw one!" "Hey, wake up and play cards; do you think you're in bed?" "If you can't handle women any better'n you play cards, I certainly feel sorry for your wife!" "You play cards like I make love when I'm drunk!"

Every time I would spring one of these jokes Jake and Harry would grin and wink at one another. We always had pleasant card games out at Carrie's. But I would never get to fully enjoying one until she brought in the sandwiches and beer and sat down behind Jake to tell him what cards he should pick out to throw in the crib. He would always throw out the cards she said, without much argument, for Carrie was generally right about cards, as she was about everything. And Jake knew it.

To-night Carrie brought us in some rich Limburger sandwiches, made with rye bread which she had baked herself; and she brought in, besides, a plate of pumpernickel, some pretzels and some pickled herring. And a quart of cold beer for each one of us. I couldn't peg worth a cent after that, and Jake and Harry simply ran away from me. But I didn't care; when I'm enjoying eating there's nothing in the world can bother me. I ate and ate until the sandwiches were all gone; and then I kept pecking away until there wasn't a pretzel or a herring left either. I swallowed the last of the cool, tingly beer, and then I carried the dishes and bottles out to the kitchen, where I hooked three big ginger boys from the cooky jar and ate them down in a hurry. I

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came back to the front room feeling quite contented with the world.

Carrie said we had played long enough; and Harry said he had better get back to his family; but before he got away Carrie started telling William R. Plunk stories, like she generally did, so he had to wait until she was through. Carrie's stories were nearly always interesting.

To-night she told about the big joke on Mr. Plunk, the one that happened when he had finished building his new home, which was the biggest in the city.

"Mr. Plunk had a fine liberry in hiss new home," said Carrie. "I heard him say time and again from hiss own mouth that it was the finest home liberry West of New York. He never had time for reading much, but he was proud of all hiss shiny books and he wanted to advertise his liberry. Mr. Plunk was advertisin' his new subdivision then, with a big picksher of himself in the papers efry day; so he had his photygrapher come and take eight photygraphs of him in his liberry, each one showin' a differ'nt part of it.

"Well, Mr. Plunk had one picksher a day run in the papers, to show all the people what a fine liberry he had. Under the picksher was run the same words each day, in big letters, MR. WILLIAM R. PLUNK IN HISS LIBERRY. The ninth day he had a fine big picksher of him on horseback printed; and somebody got it all wrong; for here the picksher of Mr. Plunk on his fine horse came out in all the papers, and underneath the picksher it said, in big letters, MR. WILLIAM R. PLUNK IN HISS LIBERRY! Ain't that right, Jake?"

"Just about right, Carrie."

Carrie sighed like it hurt her to think about it; then she slapped her fat red hand on the table and chuckled so hard that the blue-checked gingham apron bulging

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out under her double chins bounced up and down.

"Mr. Plunk was so hurt and mortified for two or three days he didn't know what to do. And efrybody in the house was the same way. Then Mr. Plunk said we might as well see the fun in it and take a joke like a joke ought to be took. And we did. That was the way it always was in Mr. Plunk's house. He was a fine man, wasn't he, Jake?"

"He was a fine man, Carrie."

She told three or four more William R. Plunk stories, and then Harry said that he had to go, and that was all there was to it. I said I'd better be leaving, too, and that I'd walk on up the street with him. Just then Beaut came in, looking so slim and handsome in a blue serge suit, and so lovesick in his face, that no one could ever think, to see him now, that he had been such a wild young burly at one time. We had another glass of beer around, and then Beaut walked with me to the car line.

"This home life is pretty wonderful," he said, as we tramped along under the street lights, after leaving Harry at his home. "I wisht I had started doin' better long ago. But it won't be so awful long now before I have my finisher's job and a home with vines over the door and a wife and kiddies. Dreams do come true, old feller."

I didn't say much. I thought I agreed with him, but I wasn't sure. Beaut had his one girl, and he wasn't forever bothered betwixt four and five of them, like I always was. I told him, though, that I was going to do my best to go the same way he was going, and I hoped things would work out as fine for me as they had for him. Of course I didn't mean that altogether; I was never one to put up with being bossed by a woman, and in his place I'd have been having a battle with Carrie Gleim two-thirds of the time.

But I had come to a point where city life seemed to

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suit me real well; I had grown somehow into the way of doing better naturally, without being urged or helped to it by anyone; and as long as I could stay comfortable and contented at it, why, it was certainly the best way to live. But I still felt too young and restless to have any notion of getting married for a long time yet. I liked too well to size up the different girls I met, and to think: "If I want to go with that one, I can; if I don't, it's the same thing." I certainly didn't want to be tied down to one woman.

When I reached my room I sat down on the bed for quite a while and looked at the four pictures on my bureau. One was of Annie, one was of the overall-factory girl, one was of a laundry girl, a second cousin of Meta's, and the fourth was of Tiva Fletcher.

Tiva's was the picture that made me sigh now. It showed a front view of her slim, dark face, which, even in the photograph, was lighted all over by her wonderful dreamy eyes. They were a marvelous blue, a kind of dark, violet color, really; but they looked black in the photograph, like her hair, which was parted in the middle and waved back above her ears. Tiva lived in Sonora Town now with her mother, who was a white Mexican woman. Her Irish father was dead. Tiva worked out with wealthy private families quite a bit, but Carrie said she had never been steady. That didn't bother me. Tiva was the sweetest little doll to love I had ever met, and that was all I thought about.

The only worry I had now was Annie Doane. The other two girls were sensible and reasonable. I wished Annie would go on and get herself another fellow, like she ought to, and not be mean and sarcastic with me. She had such a sharp tongue, and she certainly could make a man feel sinful, even when his conscience was clear. I wondered what she had meant by saying that she had something interesting to tell me. Just some

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fool woman notion, nothing that amounted to much, very likely. Oh, well! I turned off the gas and crawled into the sheets. There was no use worrying. All the men I knew said that you had to expect more or less trouble with women. "You can't get along with 'em, and you can't get along without 'em," was a very common saying among the city teamsters. That was life, and I hadn't any right to complain about my share of grief. Most men seemed to get over their women troubles somehow, and there was no reason why I couldn't, too. So I shoved all worry out of my head and went to sleep with bright thoughts of Tiva.

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XVII

After Tiva Fletcher had told me of some of her experiences as a hired girl, it was easy for me to see why she had fallen head over heels for me. Tiva was not much on talking most of the time, but what she did say, in her tinkly voice, always sounded cute, and sometimes she was real funny. It was her laugh that showed her true spirit. It sprang out of her like music; and she never thought about her looks when she was tickled, either; she just tossed back her head, opened her mouth so that all of her white teeth shone, and laughed for all she was worth. And she never talked in a more tickled way than when she was telling about working for wealthy families from Iowa. The rich sons would always get smitten on her and start making love; and the way they did it was to declare that it was a shame that such a beautiful, delicate-looking girl had to work out, and then they'd say they wanted to protect her and a lot of that rot, and they'd insist on it until Tiva'd have to pack and go.

Tiva *was* a delicate-looking beauty; but really she was strong as an ox and liked nothing better than a good, romping old rough-house. The main thing that Tiva liked about me, I guess, was that I was burly and rough, and would use my muscle to make her sit on my lap, and would pick her up in my arms and swing her around, head down, while she clawed and wiggled and had as much fun out of the rough-house as I did.

The Fletchers had their home in Sonora Town, a shabby, neglected part of Loss where most of the Mexicans lived. Of course the city couldn't spend time and

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money on improving the streets down there, as none of the Iowa immigrants wanted to live among the Mexicans, and the Iowa immigrants were the people the city had to please. Sonora Town looked pretty tough in the daytime, but at night it seemed a very lovely place. The street lights were few and far between, so the shabbiness of the cottages and the holes and ruts in the streets didn't show up much. There were bushes, palms and pepper trees in nearly all the yards, and pepper trees lined the streets. They were old and spreading trees in front of the Fletcher home; and unless the moon was high overhead their shadows would cover the pavement all along. I used to feel a kind of peace and comfort when I'd leave the Harbor Bar, the city teamsters' hangout, and come down out of the racket and glare of Main Street and get into these soft shadows. I'd walk slower then, glancing through the leaves of the bushes and palms to see the lights of the little cottages; and I'd whiff the tickling smells of the hot-seasoned Mexican food; and I'd listen to the guitars which were sounding lovely, throbbing music from about every other cottage, while the young Mexicans, who had been shoveling gravel or swamping for teamsters all week, would sing their Mexican heart songs in the most feeling way imaginable.

I could never look on the Mexicans as black foreigners. They were so jolly and friendly when you spoke to them right. And they were clean, too. Cleaner in some ways than Americans, though I hate to admit it. Most of the Mexicans I knew would not only wash their faces and hands three times a day, but their heads, too. And the women would wash the men's overalls until all the blue was scrubbed out of them. My swamper, Ernest Garcia, was as fine-looking as Indiana Beaut. The other teamsters said I shouldn't stand up for the Mexicans as I did; and maybe I shouldn't have; but I just couldn't help it.

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The Fletchers held their heads very high in Sonora Town and had one of the finest houses down there. Most of the Mexican women naturally had to look up to Mrs. Fletcher because, in the first place, she was white, and, in the second place, because her husband had been a hard-working Irish teamster who had left her a nice home and two thousand dollars in savings and two thousand dollars in life insurance. Her people lived in El Paso, Texas, and she often talked of selling out and going back to them, on account of Tiva being such an expense here and hard to manage; but I figured this was only woman talk, for she had the regular Mexican notions about everything and liked her home and her position in the neighborhood so well that it wasn't likely she would leave.

Mrs. Fletcher had liked me very much from the start. She got an idea that I was Irish, like her husband that was gone. He had used to declare that all the good teamsters were Irish ones; and Ernest, my swamper, who lived near by, had told Mrs. Fletcher time and again that I was the best teamster in Loss. I had learned long ago to humor women in the harmless notions that mean so much to them, so I let Mrs. Fletcher go on thinking I was an Irishman.

"Oh! my Joe's *pisano!* Here he is again, lookin' hungree as ever!" she cried as usual, when I drove in one summer Saturday night. Then she pecked around me like a little old bird, her black eyes sparkling and her white teeth shining until she would have looked like a girl, only for her wrinkles. Mrs. Fletcher wasn't fat, like so many Mexican women are when they are old; and I was glad of this, for it sometimes makes you shaky in your feelings about a girl when you look at her mother.

"You pretend you love my Tiva, but it's my *tortillas* you love. I know!" She shook her finger under my nose and then gave me a jab in the stomach. "To-night

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maybee I have none. But I'll see." Then she called up the dark, narrow stairs: "Tiva! Your Diego is here. Come queeck, or I feed him and he is gone—psst!—like that!"

Tiva's step sounded on the stair and Mrs. Fletcher scurried out to the kitchen. I watched the stairway. Most of it was walled in. Light fell on only the last five or six steps. The dull red paint was worn away in the center of each one, and the stairs looked like a trail of yellow spots leading up into the darkness. A white slipper—and such a small one, with such a lovely turn of white stocking on the ankle above it!—showed in the shadows, floated down like a feather, and came to a rest on one of the yellow spots in the dim light. Tiva would come so slowly that way every time; she knew her tricks, right enough. Another white foot drifted down to the next step, the frills on the hem of a white skirt drawing up above another lovely ankle, then I caught sight of Tiva's slender waist, then Tiva herself came with a rush—but only to dance around me.

"What you think of my new white dress? You don't like it. I can see by your look. Oh, all right; I know a handsome young man who has an automobile and money galore—oh, money galore—oh, money galore—and he wants me to teach him to dance *La Jota;* and he will like the white dress, Senor Diego Turnero; he will say Tiva is a flower, a beautiful flower; and what do you say, Don Diego? 'I am hungree, Tiva. Feed me, Tiva.' That's what you say. Ha! Ha!"

You simply couldn't beat that girl anywhere. All the time she was saying and singing this stuff she was waltzing around me and making impudent faces; and when she had finished she snapped her white fingers under my nose; and then she gave my hair a fearful yank and danced like a flash around the black mahogany table in the center of the room.

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"Just for that, kiddo, you get kissed," I growled, frowning my fiercest at her.

Then I made a sudden spring around the table and nearly caught her; but Tiva was a quick little doll on her feet and she dodged me until she was out of breath. I finally caught her, of course. I always did. Then I picked her up and swung her around in a circle, while she yanked my hair and tried to kick loose. But at last she settled down, snuggled up with her head on my shoulder and sighed: "Your arms are so strong! Your shoulders are so wide! You big, handsome, yellow-headed son-of-a-gun, you!" It always tickled me all over when Tiva said that. I certainly was crazy about that girl.

Mrs. Fletcher came in with a plate of *tortillas* and a bottle of wine, and I cleaned up the plate without saying a word, but just laughing and winking as the two women made jokes about my appetite. When I was younger such talk would have made me bashful, but I knew now that women like to see men eat their cooking with a relish about as well as anything. I just enjoyed myself without a qualm, and then Tiva and I struck out for a vaudeville show.

After the show we had a feed in the Brewers' Hall Café. We stayed on there until midnight; listening to the lady orchestra play the latest tunes; watching the people at the tables around—they were mostly working folks like ourselves; and saying pleasant things to each other.

The lights were bright over the tables and Tiva's beauty showed up wonderfully. There wasn't a man at any of the tables around who didn't take several admiring looks at her and as many envious looks at me. To be strictly fair to myself, I had my share of admiring looks from the girls around, too, though, honestly, I wouldn't have noticed them much if Tiva hadn't flushed

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up about them a couple of times. It tickled me when she did; but I told her not to mind, that I didn't have any foolish vanity about myself; the only thing about me that attracted the girls, I said, was my powerful shoulders and wavy yellow hair; it wasn't me at all. And that *was* about the truth, but Tiva declared I was flirting.

We spatted a little, but the fuss didn't amount to much. It couldn't, with so much music and singing going on, bright lights and laughter all around us, and natural joy in our hearts.

When the hall closed at twelve we sauntered along the street, not saying much, but just watching the thinning crowds on Main Street and enjoying being together. When we got under the pepper trees of Sonora Town we sauntered more slowly still; and we would stop to look at the moon when we could see her between the trees; and we would stop to listen when we heard the sounds of a guitar somewhere and the words of a heart song. But I liked to see Tiva's dark eyes shining in the moonlight more than I liked to see the moon; and I cared a lot more for the sound of her voice as she whispered than I cared for the sounds of music then. There is nothing more wonderful than such times, I can tell you. The pity is they won't last. Somehow they never do.

I don't think I have ever had more wonderful feelings than I had that night when I was back in my room. I stared and stared at Tiva's picture on the bureau while I sat on the bed and pulled off my pants, shoes and socks, slowly getting ready to roll in. I was thinking mighty seriously of getting married at last. I knew I was young, but I had a high job and was making good money. Tiva's father had never done so well, even in his best days, when he was driving the star packing-house team of Loss. Beaut's idea of a home with vines over

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the door and little kiddies playing in the yard had never looked more attractive to me. I had been going with Tiva about eight months now, and she got me crazier about her every time I saw her. To-morrow we were going out to the beach with Meta and Beaut. What if we were engaged this time to-morrow night? Oh, lordy! It made me sweat to think about it.

I wanted to lie awake and think about it after I got into bed. But I never could lie awake in bed and think, though I was always trying it. Nothing ever vexed me more than to be doing my best to think about something important and to find myself going right off to sleep in spite of everything. I simply couldn't help it, no matter how hard I tried. To-night, as usual, I was dead to the world in less than two minutes.

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XVIII

I'LL never forget that Sunday as long as I live. It started out like so many other Sundays in Loss, and went along like them for quite a while, but its ending was very much different.

Tiva and I met Meta and Beaut in the Interurban depot. It was hot September weather now, and our program was for a cool day at the beach. The four of us piled on the train at eleven o'clock. We got two seats together, so that each couple could face the other one. Beaut made me laugh. He was *so* careful and tender with Meta, easing her down into her seat like he was afraid she would break; fixing the window and asking her time and again if she was sure it was right, and was she sure she wasn't too hot now, and a lot more rot along the same line. I certainly wasn't that way with Tiva. The train had no more than started when she swiped my cigarettes and tried to toss them out the window, and we had a hard old tussle before I got them back. Then I made a grab for a gold ring with a little blue stone that she was awfully fond of, and by the time I got it we had both laughed so much we were weak. Meta and Beaut sat like a pair of old married stiffs.

"Come on! Wake up!" I yelled. "Ain't we out for a good time?"

Then I fetched Meta a hearty slap on the leg that made her squeal so the whole car heard her. But not many around paid any mind. The car was filled mostly with young working folks who were out for a good Sunday time like us, and laughs and squeals were pretty frequent. There were a few Iowa immigrants in the car,

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though, and they gave me a shocked look. So did Beaut. He had become absolutely finicky, and his face turned as red as a beet when Meta tried to slap me and I grabbed her hands and threatened to turn her over my knee and spank her. I could bet that he hadn't picked her up and swung her around since they were engaged. Beaut was wrong in that. Any real girl likes for her man to use his muscle on her. And Meta was a real one, though she was plump and soft and sort of easy-going. Still, Beaut did have the right to object to Meta and I carrying on; and, besides, I could see Tiva's eyes begin to snap, so I turned my attentions to her.

"What makes you love me so much, Tiva?"

"Who said I loved you, smarty? I'd be crazee, if I did."

"Hoh! Why, you're simply wild about me. Anybody can see it."

"If I am I'm wild about nothin'. Ha! Ha!"

"Haha, yourself. But come on; let's don't be rough. I'm tryin' to be nice."

"Since when?"

"All the time, kiddo. Nobody could treat you better."

"Behave yourself, now. Don't get spoony."

"Why?"

"Oh—it's hot. And that old man with the whiskers, he look and he look."

"Aw, that old hoosier! See there; even Meta's lovin' up to Beaut."

"She has a right. We're only goin' together."

"Gee! You wasn't so blame' prim last night! Come on; let's see a smile in your eyes. And call me *Diego mio.*"

"Give me back my ring before you talk."

"So that's what's eatin' you. Listen: you promise to be nice to me all day, and I'll promise to give you

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the ring when we say good night. That's a fair and square bargain."

"Give me the ring before I say anything."

"Nothin' doin'. You must think I'm soft as a kid. Come on now; smile and say: *'Si*, my Diego.' "

"I should hate you, you are so mean—Diego."

"My Diego."

"My Diego."

I had certainly learned how to handle them. It was a wonderful ride from then on. I slouched down in the seat, and Tiva snuggled near me, and we sat and laughed and whispered; and we smiled and winked every now and then at Beaut and Meta, who had got to performing in the same way. And so had most of the other young working folks in the car. I was sorry when we reached the beach; though it was thrilling to feel the cool sea breeze, and to see the bright colors of the concession stands on the pier, the gold of the sand on the beach, the white foam of the surf, the sparkling deep blue of the heaving water beyond, and the soft shining blue of the sky. And it was fine to hear the booming roar of the surf, the noise of a big roller coaster near by, and the prancing music of a band.

We shoved along with the crowds until we reached a restaurant where we could get a cheap lunch and some beer. When the lunch was finished we drifted restfully around; playing some of the games at the concessions; listening to the music, and looking for people we knew, until our lunch was digested and we were feeling livelier.

Then we rode the roller coaster for half an hour, danced for an hour or more in the big auditorium; and when the tide began to come in we were in a great humor for swimming, so we moseyed over to the bathhouse. We rented bath suits, and then Beaut and I separated from the girls until we could change rigs and get out on the beach. There we had the real fun of the day.

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For better than an hour the four of us fought the rollers as they boomed up and broke over in slathers of foam on the beach. They were running big to-day and we had a high old time with them. Beaut was careful with Meta, like he always was; whenever a roller broke over us he would boost Meta up so that she could ride it easy, though he would be knocked down himself nearly every time. I couldn't see any fun in that.

My best stunt was to dive when the roller came, and grab Tiva's ankles and pull her under as it broke. She would do me the same way whenever she got the chance; and she got it pretty often, for Tiva was a fish in the water and could really swim rings around me. But her favorite trick was to dive, swim up behind me, then suddenly come up, grab my shoulders and leap on my back, just as a roller broke over us. And what a sousing I would get then! And how sharply I would lay for her, to get even! Two young people simply couldn't have any better times than we used to have out at that beach.

Well, we frolicked in the water for better than an hour this Sunday afternoon, then the four of us went out and over to a favorite place in the sand, near the pier pilings. We used to meet up with quite a few people we knew over there and make up some kind of Sunday-night party. But to-day we didn't see anybody who looked familiar, so we just spread ourselves out to laze awhile in the sunshine and to put on some more tan. Beaut and I scooped up sand to make comfortable seats for Meta and Tiva; and then we stretched out on our backs, with our heads in the girls' laps. The four of us sort of relaxed and drowsed away in the sunshine. I could think some wonderfully calm, peaceful and gentle thoughts at such times; not about anything in particular; but just musing pleasantly around, seeing the bright side of my job with William R. Plunk, remembering only the

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best of the times I'd had with Tiva, seeing, in a kind of rosy haze, a vine-covered home, with Tiva's violet eyes shining and her red mouth smiling among the blooms around the doorway. Once in a while she'd run her soft fingers through my hair, and I would reach down and tickle her ankle; and then she would give my hair a yank, but not hard enough to start a rough-house. When I remember the Sunday afternoons of that summer it seems like I can never hope to be happier than I was when I was in the height of my glory as a six-mule teamster for William R. Plunk.

We lazed away there in the warm sand until the sun was getting pretty low and the breeze was touched with its first evening coolness. I had fallen into a doze, and I was brought out of it by a sharp dig in the ribs from Tiva.

"There's Annie Doane and her fellow," she said.

I sat up with a jump. I hadn't seen Annie for nearly two months. She had started going with an automobile mechanic named Pete Staffer about three months after I had quit her; and we had met up with them several times out at the beach since then. He was a big, good-looking guy, and Annie seemed pleased to show him off. She had never made up with Carrie and her folks again, but she had always been friendly enough with me. Several times I had wanted to ask her what she had to tell me that night in the park, I was that curious; but I had sense enough to know when I was well off and let good enough alone.

This Pete Staffer was mouthy and pretty much stuck on himself, as most of these automobile mechanics and truck-drivers seemed to be; and I had come to expect a battle with him if we met up very often, as he had got to acting a little too cocky around Tiva. I guess this was the reason Annie had been steering him away from our gang.

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They had a strange-looking couple with them to-day; that is, I didn't recognize either the man or the girl at first; and the man was a stranger really, being Pete's garage boss—but the girl! The people on the beach, the water, and the sun above the water all started whirling around me; and after a dizzy spell I found myself leaning back, with my arms out like props on each side of me, and I was gaping at this girl like a fool.

She was Isis Dowell!

"What makes you look so flabbergasted?"

Annie Doane's gray eyes were staring straight into mine, and her mouth had a smile on it. But it was a hard smile.

"I thought you'd be proud to see such an old friend," she said, in that cold, clear voice I had used to be so afraid of. "Aren't you proud, Jim? I thought I was bein' kind to bring her around."

Well, next thing I knew I was holding Isis' hand and shaking it and trying to get my wits together, while I was wondering how—how in the Sam Hill?—And then I noticed that her reddish gold hair and dreamy brown eyes looked exactly to me now as they had the last time I had seen them. Then I wondered some more. I was grinning like a fool, I guess. For a little bit it seemed to me that she had hardly changed at all. Her mouth and chin had a firmer look now; but, just the same, I could believe that we were two kids again, back on the steps of the Methodist church. But no; she was wearing a brown coat with big, shiny buttons then, and a school kid's velvet cap; and now she had on a trim little blue serge suit, with lacy frills at her neck and wrists; and the black straw hat with red flowers that was tilted to one side of her head made her look truly grown up, and even citified now. I sort of got my senses back as she pulled her hand away from mine.

"What a man you've got to be, Jimmie! And Annie

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says you are doin' so well. I always knew you would."

That was all Isis said. But I enjoyed it just to hear her voice. It was as soft and soothing and gentle as it had ever been, and to hear it made me feel like a kid some more. I tried to buck up and make some wise cracks about the world being a small old place, after all; but I just got to stammering so bad I could have kicked myself. I had come to pride myself on the neat way I could pick up a girl anywhere, always being able to say the words that would make things come my way; but here I was now, as tongue-tied as a baby.

Annie had Beaut and Meta and Tiva up by this time and was introducing them all around; and then Pete Staffer said we might as well sit down and chew the fat for a few minutes; but not for long, as the girls were on night shift, and he'd have to hustle them away in his automobile very soon. We all made a circle in the sand, but Pete was the one who chewed the fat, gabbling a mile a minute about his marvelous Ford automobile. Tiva was on my right, Isis was on my left, and Ainsy Gandelmower, the garage boss, was on her other side. He and Pete got into an argument about the Ford. I leaned over to Isis.

"Say, you know," I said, "I'm crazy to learn what you've been doin' with yourself all this time. I like to went nuts when you disappeared."

"It's a long story, Jimmie."

Then she sketched out how a freight conductor who stopped in Mrs. Ginn's boarding house had helped her to get to Huntington, Oregon; and how she had worked in a boarding house there until she had saved enough money to go to Portland. Then it had been working and living in Frisco mostly. She'd had a hard time, but she had got along. Isis was silent for a little bit, her brown eyes smiling as she looked me over in the

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most curious way. Her old dreamy, religious look came back; and I couldn't help but wonder if she *was* religious as ever; working in boarding houses and restaurants; joy-riding, it looked like, with garage men. I wondered now. But there was that pure, far-away look in her brown eyes. It got me. It made me feel low, and at the same time kind and sacred again. I actually forgot Tiva.

"I want to ask you so many questions, Isis. I got to have a real talk with you. When can I have it?"

"First chance, Jimmie. I'm on nights this week where Annie is—Smarns'. You can see me off shift to-morrow night, maybe, if you want to stay up that late."

I started to say: "You bet your sweet life I will"; then I noticed that the argument had stopped and that there was a silence all around the circle. Gandelmower was glaring at me. I looked at Tiva; her cheeks were bright, but her eyes were snapping a look straight ahead. Lordy, I didn't want to get into a mess with her. I got my wits together and went to talking on unconcernedly, in a conversational way.

"Well, when did you think of comin' to our fair city of Loss, Isis?"

"Last December, Jimmie."

Her voice was as soft, her gaze as dreamy as ever. Concern, it, I thought, she's too blamed innocent; why don't she be conversational, too?

"You been here all this time?" I said.

"Oh, no. I was back in Frisco. I've been here just two weeks now."

"I met her last December," Annie cut in. "I wanted to tell you one night, but you were in *such* a hurry! She's a cashier at Smarns' now. You've been quite a stranger there, but maybe we'll see you around again."

So *that* was what Annie'd had on her mind on the

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night I quit her. I saw that Tiva was biting her lip, and I gave Annie a look that ought to have killed her, but she met it with her frosty stare and smiled.

"If you girls want to be in town in time to go on shift, we'd better get to the Ford," said Gandelmower, frowning savagely at me.

"Yes, we'd better go," said Annie. "I s'pose you'll drop around sometime, Jim, when you're not in too big a hurry."

I didn't say a thing, for I saw that Tiva wasn't getting up with the others. But I gave Isis a look that said more than words. She squeezed my hand and gave me the sweetest smile before she turned away. I let out a monstrous sigh as I watched the four walk up the beach. For a little ways the garage boss grouched along by himself, his hands stuck in his pockets; then Isis smiled up at him, and I could see him change all over—that quick! That girl certainly had a power, she did. A lot of the light over the beach and the water seemed to go away with her. I sighed again, then I looked down at Tiva; and, though I knew I was absolutely in the right and had done nothing wrong, I felt mean somehow, and I did my best to ease her mind by telling her how Isis was just a childhood friend who'd grown up next door to me, and a few other soothing lies that were harmless and likely to calm her.

Tiva sat and listened to me quietly. She sat with her knees up and her slim ankles crossed, her arms resting on her knees, and her chin on her clasped hands. Her mouth was pressed into a tight little line, and her dark eyes looked at me in a moody way as I talked along, and now and then they seemed to just flash.

"It's kind of nice to bump into an old friend that way," I finished up. "I guess I *ought* to drop around and talk over old times with her some evening. She'll expect it, bein' as we used to go to school together. Nice

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girl, but I must say she never appealed to me much."

I thought I had made it up good enough to satisfy any girl, and I smiled frankly at Tiva. But she was only showing her white teeth in a yawn. Blame it, I thought, I'll have a tough old time with her yet.

"Let's run to the bathhouse."

Tiva was up and away without another word, and the rest of us trotted behind her. Usually we'd have romped along; but I had no humor for romping now, and I knew Tiva hadn't one, either.

We all had a quiet supper together. Beaut and Meta got moony as soon as the lights were turned on and had eyes for no one but themselves. Tiva got to talking and laughing like her old self, and I was thankful that she carried everything off so well, though I was worried when she kept her hands and feet away from me under the table.

We fooled around the concessions and danced some more; we had a last ride on the roller coaster and caught the ten o'clock train for town. And in an hour and a half Tiva and I were walking once more in the shadows of the pepper trees in Sonora Town.

"I have put things on long enough!"

Tiva spoke suddenly in a low voice, but with a fierceness that made me shiver.

"I thought I would say good night and no more, and let you go to that red cat, if you wanted to. But I feel too much that you make a fool of me to-day. You were a nice smarty to lie so. You think I'm crazee and don't know when you make lies? Tiva can tell, and every time, you bet you. Shame on you, Jim Turner!"

Well, confound it, that made me mad. A man has to lie to get along with women, and they ought to know it and expect it. All I'd told her about Isis and me was just to make her feel satisfied that I was all for her, as I really was, and not be jealous and hurt. It had been

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for her own good, and she ought to have known that I meant right by her, or else I wouldn't have gone to the trouble. I stepped away from her and stopped.

"Looky here, Tiva," I said. "Don't think for a minute I'll stand for much of this talk!"

"This talk! You want an excuse—you want to get away, don't you?"

"You seem to want to think so mighty bad," I said.

Tiva stepped close to me and looked straight up into my eyes. Some moonbeams sifted through the leaves overhead and shone faintly on her cheeks, making her eyes look like two misty shadows. I weakened a little, but I was still hostile, and I looked away. Then I felt her hand give my coat collar a fierce little jerk.

"Who is she? When did you know her? What is she to you? No; hush! What do I care for her? Pfff! She looks like a fool. Well, why don't you tell me she is a joke and you hate her? Go on and tell me you hate that red cat—but it wouldn't be the truth!"

Well, there it was. The truth would only make it worse, and I knew it. It always does. What I needed to do was to go ahead with what I had thought about the night before, and take Tiva in my arms right there and make her feel in her heart that she was the only girl in the world for me. I could have done it, and without any talk of lies or truth or anything else. But I didn't have sense enough. I was too mad and stubborn. I had to go ahead and try to argue and ball things up properly.

"Oh, for Pete's sake, be sensible!" I pulled her hand away from my coat. "There's no use in you bein' so fool jealous about nothin'. I said she was a girl I'd known when I was a kid in Idaho and hadn't seen for nearly four years. You can take that or leave it. You could have told she was just an old friend, the way she acted."

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"The way she acted! The way she acted! As if you can tell anything by a girl's actin'! I saw how you looked at her. And she asked you to come see her, didn't she? And you'll go, won't you?"

"Well, what if I do? She's an old friend. Why not?"

"Go then—go—go to see your red cat—but don't come back to Tiva!"

"You're tryin' to make a fool out of me. What do you think I am?"

"What do I care what you are? Go on to your old friend, the red cat! I hope she scratches your eyes out!"

"All right, if that's the way you feel about it. Good night!"

And with that I turned and tramped straight back up the street. I thought once I heard a faint "Diego!" from the shadows of the pepper trees behind me, but I was too wrathy to pay any mind. Tiva'd know it when she got a chance to kick me around and abuse me again, I thought. I was absolutely in the right, and I knew it. Still, I felt miserable.

You usually are, I've found; no matter how absolutely in the right you are when you quarrel with a woman, you always feel miserable about it.

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XIX

It was the second night of the week that I had walked with Isis and Annie from Smarns' restaurant to their boarding house. Annie had gone on in and Isis and I were sitting on the steps that led up to the little square porch. There was a trellis on each side of the steps and we sat in the shadows of vine leaves. The street in front was dark. A lamp shone whitely over the car line half a block away. As on the other night, Isis had sat quietly for a long spell, looking at me now and then while I talked of old times, but mostly gazing dreamily out into the darkness. It was the same gaze that had seemed so religious and sacred to me in the old days. I wasn't so sure of this now. But I did feel sentimental.

"Something appears to be troublin' you a lot," I said, gently taking her hand. "I wish you'd tell me about it, Isis, and let me help you."

"There ain't nothin'. I'm all right."

Her voice sounded so cool and far-away that it might have been the breeze coming through the vines that sounded the words. But she was letting her hand rest quietly in mine.

"Aw, come on; come out of your dream, kiddo, and tell me all about it."

It made me feel better, and surer of myself, to talk in my natural way to her. I thought I felt her hand squeeze mine a little and I was encouraged to go on.

"See here, Isis, you was the first girl I ever cared a thing about, and you did a lot of good for me. You were always kind of sacred to me. You really started me to doin' better one time, and I declare I believe your

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influence stayed right with me and helped me get to doin' so good down here. I want to be your real friend, Isis. If you got trouble that makes you brood around this way I want to help you out. If it's that you're still religious and have a hard time bein' so in this restaurant life, or anything else like that, I want you to know you can have my sympathy and my help, too. That's the truth, kiddo, if I ever spoke it."

And it was; and it made me feel mighty fine to say it, too.

"I liked you wonderfully well, Jimmie," said Isis. "I used to think about you a lot, and remember how kind and gen'lemanly you were. I did have a hard time of it, Jimmie, after I left Boise."

"You poor kid," I said. "Well, Isis, I had a hard time, too, and it always helped to think of you. I remembered how you was, and that helped me along. It almost drove me nuts when you disappeared, and I knowin' you'd just been put upon."

I shut up then for a while, as I didn't really want to get sentimental. Isis appeared to smile a little in the dark, then she got that troubled, dreamy gaze again. For a minute there was no sound except the whisper of the vine leaves.

"I mean it, Isis, when I say I want to be your true friend. If you need help, don't be afraid to let me know."

"I have got trouble, Jimmie. I've had it ever since—oh, long before I ever met you. It's—oh, I wonder if I *can* tell you. You'd be foolish about it. You wouldn't understand."

"Don't you be afraid, Isis. I meant exactly what I said."

"First it was boys, then it was men. Oh, you men!" said Isis.

Her voice sounded soft and far-away, exactly as it had

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one night long ago; and now she turned suddenly towards me and laid her hand on my shoulder and looked at me exactly as she did that time, too.

"You've always had such powerful shoulders, Jimmie. It was them, them, and you bein' a hobo. Do you know if you hadn't been a hobo I'd never cared a bean about you?"

"You wouldn't!" I just gasped it, I was so surprised.

"Not once. I was full of dreams, Jimmie; dreams about wild, excitin', far-away places and strange people. But I thought it was a sin to dream that way, I was ashamed of it, and I tried to keep my mind on religion. But now—oh, Jimmie, I'm a fool to be tellin' you all this. You can't understand."

I agreed with her in my mind, but I wouldn't say anything.

"You can't understand," Isis went on, her voice getting a kind of fierceness in it. "None of you men do. Still, it's always the men. Jimmie, listen. I don't care a snap for the men I know as they really are; I just like to put them in my dreams of some far-off place I've never known. Some romantic place I've read about. I can look at you now, Jimmie, and see you working away down in the Andes Mountains, brawny and brave-lookin' in your shirt sleeves, as you come out of a silver mine, maybe, your yellow hair wavin' in the wind. You would make a wonderful Andes silver miner, Jimmie. And you'd look fine down on the Pampas, too, a something or other on a horse, ridin' after Argentine cattle. I can just *see* you, Jimmie!"

Well, I certainly was struck all of a heap. I'd never imagined anything like this, and I hadn't expected to. I couldn't believe she knew what she was talking about. If Isis hadn't been truly religious, then I'd never seen anyone who was. The only way I could explain it was that she was trying to make fun of me. I felt a little

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wrathy. This wasn't a decent way to treat an old friend.

"See here, Isis," I said, "your dreamin' of me that way is all right, I guess, and maybe I ought to feel flattered about it; but, all the same, I want to tell you the last thing on earth I'd be is a miner, and the next to the last thing is a cow hand."

Isis took her hand from my shoulder with a jerk, then she sighed deeply.

"You wouldn't understand in a hundred years. Men never do. They always want a girl to think they are great and grand as they are. There's Mr. Gandelmower; he's so proud of himself as a garage boss; and he'd never understand why I like him so much better when I dream about him bein' on the bridge of a ship in a tropical storm. But how in the world could I care a cent about him as he really is?"

I was relieved to know she wasn't smitten with that garage boss, but I was still up a stump about her notion of me. I couldn't fathom why she should want me to be a South American cow hand.

"You know that ridin' after cattle is a poor life," I argued. "You've seen lots of cow hands in Idaho, and you know they don't amount to much."

"But down there you wouldn't be a cow hand, but a something or other with a beautiful Spanish name," said Isis impatiently. "And you wouldn't be ridin' the range, but the plumy Pampas. And you wouldn't wear fuzzy old chaps, but velvet pants with bell bottoms and with shiny silver buttons along the legs. But you can't see what I mean. None of the men understands."

"Looky here," I said, still trying to get her idea straight in my mind, "when I was a wild, young burly of a hobo, why didn't you come out and say what you was dreamin' then? What did you want to go on and get us all into such a muss for?"

"I simply wasn't grown up," said Isis. "I felt I ought

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to be religious, and I was. I really was, until Abby and Dan finally whipped it out of me. And I had plenty more trouble gettin' to be free and independent like I am now. Well, you just try to understand this, Jimmie: I don't care a snap of my finger about your fine job with William R. whatever his name is. I just like you because there seems to be something romantic about you. If we're to go on bein' friends now, you know how you got to take me, that's all."

"I guess you're just a hobo in your mind," I said, thinking I had something of the right of it at last. "And I guess I am, too, when you get right down to it. So we ought to get along, if I can stand of you thinkin' of me as a cow hand. And I guess I can."

I was sure of it as I looked at her sitting there by my side in the shadows of the vines. Isis was quiet now, dreaming again, I supposed; and I was mighty glad, anyway, to know that she wasn't worrying about some trouble. I didn't say a word, but just watched her. At last Isis sighed, put her hand on mine, and I saw her teeth shine in a smile.

"I'll get along with you, Jimmie; don't worry about that. Maybe you'll get along with me; I've been honest with you, and you know what to expect now." She sighed again, then laughed. "It's a funny life, Jimmie, though it's pretty hard sometimes. As Annie would say, I'm proud to think I've got the best of it so far. You can't imagine how much pleasure I get out of a cashier's job. Nearly every man who comes up to pay his check can make a new dream for me. Even some old Iowa man with long whiskers I can see as dressed in flowing white robes and being back with Moses or John the Baptist or some of the others we used to hear about in church. Wouldn't he be surprised if he knew how I was seein' him? Even old Smarns—wouldn't he be surprised if he knew I was seein' him in a green turban, a

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red jacket, a purple sash, and orange-colored baggy pants in Bombay or Shanghai or some other big city in India, when he comes up to ask me how business is goin'? Well, that's the way I see the men who come to my desk; and that makes it easy to smile and be pleasant when I give them their change. Do you think I'm crazy, Jimmie?"

Isis turned and put her soft hand on my shoulder again. And her look and her smile made me feel just—just, oh, swimmy. I couldn't help it.

"Do I talk like a fool, Jimmie? Don't I disgust you?"

"Lordy, I should say not!" I said it like I meant it, and I certainly did. It wasn't her fault if she wasn't religious any more; that wonderful spirit of hers had just turned into another way, and it was still wonderful. "Why, Isis," I went on, "I've always remembered you as one of the most beautiful and lovable girls I ever knew; but I'd never dreamed you had such an imagination. It kind of knocked me over at first, but I think it's fine now, and I'm glad you got it."

"Then we're goin' to be real true friends, aren't we?"

"We certainly are. You can always count on me, Isis."

"And you're sure you like my imagination, are you?"

"I like it fine, though I won't pretend I quite understand it."

"Well, then, I'm on days next week and I got a place I want you to take me Thursday night. I can't go anywhere with you Sunday, for I've already promised Mr. Gandelmower. But I wouldn't want anyone but you for this thing Thursday."

"I said you could count on me, and you can."

"Thanks. Well, good night, Jimmie."

I went to give her a hug, like a young fellow is always supposed to when he says good night to a girl, but she

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slipped away from my arm and skipped up the steps. She waved her hand as she opened the door.

"Good night, Isis," I said.

The door slammed, and I was alone out there in the dark. I started for the car line, feeling very much uplifted and thrilled as I walked along, and smiling to myself over Isis' notions. Then it got to seeming to me that I had forgotten something; and then in a flash Tiva's lovely face came before me, and I heard her sweet, hearty laugh and her gay talk, and I remembered her cunning, loving ways, and I felt absolutely sick for a minute. I didn't want to lose that girl, and I knew perfectly well I didn't. I was acting like a bull headed fool. I ought to go right to her this very next night and tell her so and beg her to go out with me Sunday. But I'd be blamed if I would! She knew I was absolutely in the right, and when she admitted it, I'd go back and make up, and not a minute before. She knew where I stayed, and she knew Carrie and Meta and Beaut. No girl could abuse me and get away with it, no matter if I did think everything of her.

But it was a muss, I thought, as I stood and waited for a San Pedro Street car. There was Isis. I couldn't desert her, even if I did make up with Tiva. I had promised to be her friend, and I owed her a lot for old times' sake. Besides, she was a wonderful girl. She'd had a hard time of it. She needed protection from fellows like this Gandelmower. Tiva ought to know this. She did know it, but she was so jealous-hearted—a dazzling light swung around a curve, a bell jangled, and my car rattled down the street. I still felt torn up in my thoughts as I rode along. And peace of mind was a long, long ways off, much farther than I could imagine, even then.

It was dull days on my job during the rest of this week and the first part of the next. And I put in a

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dismal, lonesome Sunday. And I wasn't feeling any too good on Thursday night when I got ready to go for Isis. But I dolled up in my best—a blue serge suit, straw hat, pink-striped shirt, tan silk socks with red dots, and shiny yellow oxfords. And I met Isis with a bright smile and asked her cheerfully what show we were headed for. Well, it was no show at all, but the infernalest place imaginable.

The place Isis hauled me to was no other than Burbank Hall, where some Anarchist meetings were going on. A woman named Emma Goldman was the talker, and the newspapers gave her the name of being a regular rip. I had learned to depend on the newspapers quite a bit, and I thought a young girl like Isis hadn't ought to hear a woman who the newspapers said would come right out in meeting for free love. But Isis only sniffed when I objected; she wouldn't argue, and when a girl won't argue you can't talk her out of anything, of course. So we went to hear the Anarchist woman talk.

Well, it wasn't so bad. She was really a harmless-looking old lady, plump and actually kind of motherly like. But, lordy, she talked about things no man could understand unless he'd spent whole years studying them; and she had a great pile of books along, which she admitted everyone had to read before being able to understand what she was talking about. It was just library talk again, and nothing else.

Well, it might be all right for a man who can't go out and pick up a girl and have a good time; but, I said to Isis, if a man spends all his spare time reading, how can he ever have any fun? But she was so far away in her dreams that she wouldn't answer. I didn't bother her any more, and I didn't try to understand the Anarchist woman's library talk any more either; I just amused myself by sizing up the audience, which was a queer-looking lot, with many black foreigners in it. Many of the men

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had long hair, and there was hardly a one who could match me for clothes. The girls around didn't appeal to me much either, except for a little Jewish one, whose shape rather took my eye.

The talk got more and more like a sermon, and it seemed like it never would end. But it did, finally; and then the people in the audience began to get up and argue and give testimony, just like Methodists at prayer meeting. After about two dozen men and women had stamped and snorted and pawed their fill, the meeting broke up.

"That stuff makes me sick," I said to Isis, when we were out on the street. "I don't see how it can get you anywheres. Why in the world do you want to hear it?"

"You never understand, Jimmie," Isis sighed. "None of the men does. Did you think for a minute I was seein' Anarchists here in America? No; I saw all the men up there dressed in blouses and bushy whiskers and droshkies; and over in a hidden cellar in Russia they were, drinkin' vodka and samovars; and I saw Emma Goldman as a flamin' peasant girl who had heard voices and was inspired to preach revolt against the Czar. But you can't understand, Jimmie."

Well, I couldn't and that was a fact.

The days went on and Tiva and I were still apart. I got to going with Isis more and more. Every time I'd go out I'd think: "I'll show that Tiva lady how she can treat me." I enjoyed going with Isis, although she never took pains to amuse anybody but herself. She was a beauty and made everybody stare when she passed, and she wore wonderful clothes. Isis kept me guessing about what she was going to imagine next, and it was interesting to hear her tell, but she always would pick the strangest and most foreign places to go to.

Two times she made me take her to hear a big orchestra play; and I enjoyed the music very much, though there

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wasn't much tune to it; but sometimes the different instruments would blend their sounds together in a way that would make you want to just rise up and yell; and sometimes the violins would sing alone, while the big fiddles throbbed deep, mournful sounds, making you feel sad and calm and forgetful of everything else in the world. I enjoyed the music a good deal, and I'd have enjoyed it more if it hadn't been played in a Methodist church every time. The place was built like a theater, but it was really a church, for Sunday school and preaching were held in it every Sunday. I couldn't get over a churchy feeling most of the time when I was listening to the music. Half the time I was expecting the orchestra leader to dive down on me and try to lead me up to grace.

But Isis wasn't bothered a bit this way. She used her imagination and wasn't in a Methodist church at all when she listened to the music; but she was in a big theater in Germany, she said; and all the starched-up Iowa immigrants around us were gay and frolicsome college boys and girls from a place called Old Heidelberg; and when the music was over, Isis would say that now the students were going out to dance and drink steins and sing leader under the elms. Isis certainly was a bright girl. She knew a lot, and if she was to ever get her imagination in the right path, she'd amount to something, I often thought.

Then came the night when Isis had me take her to a big café near Sonora Town, where there was a Mexican orchestra, and where there was always a crowd of Mexicans with their *señoritas* at the tables. We got a place about two-thirds of the way up the room, where we had a good view of the orchestra and the small place in front of it, where couples danced sometimes, in spite of the fact that the Iowa immigrants had ordered café dancing stopped all over the city. There were brown stains from chili sauce and red stains from wine on the tablecloth; there

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were cigarette butts scattered around on the floor and the air was so blue with smoke that the yellow curtains and red walls appeared very dingy in the misty light. But Isis laughed excitedly and said it was the most romantic place she had found in Loss yet. The Mexican men and girls at the tables around mostly looked like dressed-up Indians, but Isis raved about them, too.

She said that we were in a town called Civil and that the Mexicans and their girls were bullfighters and cigarette-rollers. I was used to her talk now and didn't pay much attention to it. I ordered some hot chicken tamales and wine; and then the guitars and the violins of the orchestra started making some music; and I listened to it, and puffed on a cigarette, and stared around. I noticed Isis was calling my attention to somebody.

"Don O'Say," she murmured, the far-away look in her eyes.

I craned my neck and looked and I saw Ernest Garcia. He had quit William R. Plunk altogether about three weeks before and I hadn't seen hair nor hide of him since. I thought now I might go up and say hello to him when I had finished eating.

"Don O'Say," said Isis again. "And Carmen is with him, as I live."

"That's Ernest Garcia, my old swamper," I said.

"Don't spoil everything—— But who's with him? Isn't she the little girl I met out at the beach that day?"

I came to life then, right enough; I raised up and stared, stared straight into Tiva Fletcher's eyes! She was so surprised she just looked at me wide-eyed for a minute, then she flushed, looked away; and my heart pounded as I saw her start a smile. Then she saw Isis Dowell. And her head went up and she started laughing and chattering with Ernest like nothing at all had happened. I dropped back in my seat and swore to myself as hard as I could swear. Then I heard the orches-

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tra swing into the familiar music of *La Jota*. And Tiva danced out on the floor.

Ernest followed her. Ernest Garcia, who had never been higher than a swamper, and who never would be, was dancing *La Jota* with Tiva! I could believe that she was doing it on purpose for me, just to insult me, and for nothing else in the world. I was certain of it. For a little bit I felt like tearing out of the place and letting Isis and Tiva and all go square to the devil. But Isis' hand was on my arm. I sat and watched the dance.

Tiva was holding a pretty red rose in her prettier mouth. She made her little feet flash out in time to the music, as she twisted in sudden quarter-turns, whirling her hands and snapping her fingers in the gracefulest way at every turn in the dance. She kept tossing her head back, and her white throat would shine then in the dim lights. And when her head went back she would close her eyes and smile; and when she nodded her head again she would roll her eyes at Ernest, who was prancing like a fool in a circle around her. He looked so idiotic that I got sick of watching them; and I just looked down at the glass of wine I was holding in my hand until the music stopped. Then I saw Tiva flash Isis a smile which was as haughty and scornful as a queen could have shown. Isis never batted an eye; she just went on smiling herself, but in a dreamy, pleased way.

"That turned out fine," she said.

"It didn't seem fine to me," I said. "That Mex looked like a fool."

"You don't understand," Isis sighed. "He was Don O'Say, and he was making the last love dance with Carmen before he sent her to her doom. This is certainly a wonderful place to see things."

"I guess you'd see a whole menagerie if you drank much of this sour wine," I said. "Let's eat and get out of here."

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I never looked once in Tiva's way again that evening.

The winter crawled along. I kept going the same way, cocky and proud. I was riding high, higher than a young fellow my age had a right to be, I guess. I hadn't learned sense yet, and I kept trying to bull my luck along. I was bound to make women and work come my way, whether or no. I had been having my way without trouble for a long time, but now my luck was breaking and I hadn't learned yet how to take it. I was simply too bullheaded, I guess. It was a family failing. My uncle used to have an humble, downhearted spell every once in a while, usually after he had been licked in a fight or had lost some stock, and then he would say:

"I ain't never prayed yet, but if I was to get in the humor once, all I would say is: 'Lord, save me from the Turner bullheadedness!' I wouldn't ask a-nother thing more."

Well, I would work through the day, and in spite of the interest I would try to take in my job and the talk I would make with my swamper, I couldn't keep my mind off Tiva Fletcher. There'd come a quiet spell as we were riding along, and then her beautiful eyes would shine in front of me, and I'd see her smile and hear her young laugh. And then I'd settle down and ache miserably inside and call myself eleven kinds of a fool for not going down and making up. But then I'd always remember how absolutely in the right I was, and I was too cocky and proud and bullheaded to quite get myself down to Sonora Town.

Nights I would doll up and step around to the Harbor Bar and lord it among the city teamsters for a while, and then I would ramble over to Smarns' or down to the boarding house to see Isis. She kept me coming, and I was willing, as it seemed that she was getting to take the place of Tiva more and more. Very often now I got to feeling with her like I had when I was a kid. If she had

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only stayed religious, the old times might have come back without hindrance. But she hadn't. Isis was beautiful and kind now, but in other ways she did seem strange. Her worst feature was her habit of going with three or four men, picking the one for an evening that happened to suit her notion at the time, and insisting that she had a perfect right to do it. To save me, I couldn't argue her into being loyal. Every so often I'd go down to her boarding house and find her gone out with Gandelmower or somebody else, and then I'd have to go and get some girl I didn't care a hoot about to spend the evening with. Or else ramble out to Carrie's.

But I didn't go out there very much any more. Carrie would lecture me about Tiva, and I wouldn't stand for it, so most of my visits out there would end in hot arguments. And Isis didn't care for Meta and Beaut; she said they were just a common young couple and didn't have a particle of romance about them. So I came to depending on the times I could get with Isis more and more.

There was a February night when we were caught in a terrible rain. The water was foaming curb-high in the street when we got off the car. I took Isis in my arms and carried her over to the sidewalk, carried her on up the street to the boarding house, and did not put her down until we were in the shelter of the little porch. A hard wind blew the rain in on us. Isis shivered and stood close to me. Carrying her so far had warmed me up and I was panting a little. I felt her hands on my shoulders.

"You just ran with me, Jimmie. My, but you are strong!"

"What did you imagine I was then, Isis?"

"Nobody. Just yourself, I mean. I honestly did."

"That's the first time, I guess. I wonder when one'll come again."

"You'd be surprised if I just always imagined you

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exactly this way after to-night, wouldn't you, Jimmie?"

A gust of wind showered us with rain. Isis drew closer. I felt her wet cheek against mine. And then she gave me the first real kiss I ever had from her.

"See here, honey, are you meanin' this? What's it all about?"

"I—oh, I can't say, Jimmie. I can't think to-night—not a blessed thing. I feel so sort of dreary. I get tired of imaginin' bright things. I do, sometimes."

"Have you made up your mind to be my own girl again, and nobody else's? Is that it?"

"I can't say now. I'm cold. Let me go in."

"Well, this *is* a strange way. All right, honey. When'll I see you? To-morrow night?"

"No. Oh, I'm sick and tired of runnin' around, of everything."

"You're blue, Isis. I'll come to-morrow night."

"Promise me you won't come till Sunday."

"Well, I won't then, if you insist so strong. But I don't see why."

"Never mind. And no matter what happens, you'll know I won't forget this night. I promise you that, Jimmie. It's—oh, that wind and rain makes me shiver. Good night, now."

Isis kissed me again and was gone into the boarding house before I could say another word. I was puzzled and worried for a minute, then I tramped down into the storm. I felt better as I bucked the wind and sloshed through puddles of water for the car line. Isis was simply strange; it was her nature, that was all; and if she'd suddenly taken a notion to like me as I was, I ought to be thankful. Isis was a wonderful girl, and I ought to be truly thankful if she was coming my way at last. In spite of the stormy darkness around, life looked brighter to me than it had for many a day.

Sunday morning the sun was shining again, and I felt

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in a fine holiday humor as I hopped up the boarding-house steps. But neither Annie nor Isis appeared when I knocked at the door of their room. Ditched again! I caught a car out to Vernon and sulked around, drinking beer by myself until evening, and watching some boxers train. It was poor amusement, and I was in a mean humor as I rode back to town and tramped down to Smarns'. Isis would be on night shift this week. I intended to march up to the cashier's desk, tell her a few things, and make her decide right there as to whether it was to be Jim Turner only, or good-bye.

But Smarns himself was at the cashier's desk. He looked terribly grouchy, so I went down to Annie for the news. She stared at me for a good spell before she answered my question, her gray eyes brightening as she looked, and her mouth making a thin smile.

"Isis—is married," said Annie very slowly.

I felt dumb and cold. I just sat on the stool and stared at Annie. She put both hands on the counter and brought her face so close to mine that I pulled back. Her eyes simply glittered now, and the corners of her mouth were twisted down. She let her words come like bits of ice falling into a glass.

"I've been waitin' a long time for this. You were too proud ever to listen to me, wasn't you? I'd have told you one night that I'd made up to Frank Dariel and found that Isis Dowell was still his girl. I would have told you that she made a special trip down here from Frisco just to be where he was for a couple of weeks. But you wouldn't listen to a girl you was sick of. Oh, no! I could have told you how she would rave about her 'poet prince,' as she called him sometimes. I could have told you they were writin' all the time and would get married when he was discharged from the Navy. I——"

"Aw, go to the devil!"

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I felt pretty sick as I slid down from the stool.

"Still so proud of yourself are you? They were married day before yesterday. You ought to have been around. You missed a wonderful weddin'. But I s'pose you wasn't invited. You goin' without eatin'? How strange! Give my regards to Miss Fletcher!"

I didn't say a word, but walked on towards the door. Smarns looked up from a newspaper as I came along.

"You heard about Isis?" he asked, in his thick voice. "It's a shame, I say. The girl was born for this job. I say she was *born* for it. To have such a talent for this job, and then to get married! I say she was a fool. To a sailor who would come in here with a ukulele she got married. A ukulele-player! Bah!"

I was overcome by the most curious fancy, and I stopped to look at Smarns. I remembered how Isis had always imagined him—in a green turban, purple jacket, orange-colored sash and red pants, or something like that—and now I could swear that I saw him in such a rig myself. I almost choked when I thought maybe I'd at last got so I could understand Isis; and here it was, too late!

"Well, what you look at me about?" growled Smarns. "I couldn't help if she give you the mittens. I say she was a fool. The girl was born for this job. I never get another like her, I say."

I didn't have any comeback for him; I just wanted to get outside, so I turned to the door. But here was Annie again.

"Don't be a nut about Isis." She had me by the arm, her gray eyes had a softer gaze now, and she spoke like she did when we had gone together. "Isis won't stick to Frank. She's too man-crazy. There's only one thing in the world she cares about, and that is to get men going over that dream stuff of hers. How she can tell it!

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And how they all fall for it! I honestly thought you'd have more sense."

"Cut it out. You're just jealous of her."

"My, I'd be awful proud if I ever thought I had a chance to be," said Annie, dropping her hand from my arm. "Any girl would have to be proud before she could dare to feel jealous of Isis Dowell—I mean, Mrs. Dariel. Goodness, how that does make you squirm!"

"You or nobody else'll ever see me squirm around this town again."

"You're not goin' to pull out, Jim!"

"What do you care? Who the hell does care? Good night!"

Annie Doane's eyes got their frosty sparkle again, and she snapped out in her old way:

"Men are all fools, the worst fools imaginable. I'm certainly proud to be a girl!"

A blue old Monday. I woke up about eleven o'clock feeling sluggish and worthless like you always do when you've overloaded with liquor the night before. Even after a hearty breakfast I just slouched along in my work clothes for the barns, and I couldn't feel like I cared what the superintendent had to say to me for not showing up in the morning.

"There's a three-up asphalt rig waitin' for you, Turner, and that's all. You ain't been showin' enough interest in your work and your outfit the past few months. This caps the climax. I guess you're too much of a kid for the job anyway."

It made me hot for a minute, him calling me a kid, and I came mighty near showing him with my fists what kind of a man I was right there. But I simply didn't have the spirit for it.

"I'll take my time, I guess," was all I said.

"All right. Suit yourself."

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By the time night fell I was humble and meek. I was as little bullheaded as anybody could have asked for. At last I was down in Sonora Town. I hoped to see a light in the Fletcher home. There was none—no light except the moonbeams which seemed to dance around as tree boughs and palm leaves swayed in the breeze. The gate was swinging open. I walked up the path. The grass was moldy and rank on each side of me. The porch showed scraps of paper and dirt where the moonlight struck it. A sign was nailed on a post. There were Spanish words on it advertising the house for rent. I heard a guitar twanging from the shadows of the porch next door. I called out, and a young Mexican answered my call. The Fletchers had been gone more than two months now. Where? To El Paso, some said. *Si*, Ernesto Garcia had left Sonora Town. For El Paso, too, perhaps. He did not know.

"*Buenos noches, señor.*"

Oh . . . hell.

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XX

I HAD simply been a fool about women. That was the idea I had during the year that followed, as I batted about from pillar to post, without any ambition or purpose in life. I blamed my restlessness and general cussedness all on Isis and Tiva. But I can't hold to that idea now. I can see young laborers nowadays coming and going in the same kind of torment and turmoil of soul; and they blame women, as a rule, for the foolish and reckless things they do, just as I did. They are wrong, though it's a waste of time to tell them so; the fact is that they are having the battle with life which every man has when he is young—the battle he has when he gets to the point where he has to settle down to a job and get himself comfortable in it, or else cut loose and be a roving boomer, without a family and without a home.

It's frolic and fun with a kid, even when he is toiling away his ten hours a day at a regular man's job. It's still frolic and fun with the young fellow, even when he gets to the age where he is proud of his muscles and the fresh whiskers on his face and the way he knocks the girls dead as he ogles them on the street. He still looks for fun in his job, the girls are just to play with, and life in general is just to-day and to-night and no more. But the time comes when he is bound to take women and work seriously; the time when he must see every little thing in his job and his private life as serious and important and worth thinking mighty soberly about. He must learn that women and work are the two realest propositions in all his years to come. If he doesn't he will get to continually cussing everything in life up one side and down

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the other simply because it isn't funny any more, and he becomes a crank. Or else he will go booming from one job to another all his days, looking everywhere for the frolicsome adventure he had as a kid. But you have to own a talent for this; you have to be able to keep on dreaming things, something like that girl, Isis, did. Life will just drab out on the average workingman if he doesn't get to taking his little part of it as serious and important, and he will become mean and miserable and fit for nothing but the name of a crank.

Usually the young laborer comes out all right. He settles down to learning a trade that suits him, marries a girl of his own kind, and becomes a steady, sober, serious worker who takes a pride in his job and loves his home and family. If he has women folks like Indiana Beaut got among, he may sober down long before he is twenty-five. If he is wild and burly and bullheaded and proud of himself, like I was, it usually takes several hard-hitting years to tame him down. If he gets into the habit of booming over the country in those years and doesn't happen to meet up with a woman who suits him, and fails to get started in the trade he has a knack for, he is apt to never settle down to taking life seriously. That was the way of it with the old-time hobo laborers, in the days of the big jobs. On them a man could easily get into the way of being an adventurer or a crank. Nowadays you can trust the wild-acting young buck who tears around from one job to another to stay settled finally. The temptations to hobo and boom are about all gone.

When I left Loss I didn't take to the camps again or fall back into the old ways of hobo labor for about a year. I had a stack of good clothes, I had saved over two hundred dollars, and I was still strong for city life. So I simply shipped my stuff and hoboed to another town, Casey in Missouri. There I went to teaming for a

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brick company, but it was a poor job, and I didn't like Missouri when the hot weather came; so I hoboed on to Shy. I was seeing the towns I had used to dream about so gloriously, at last. They were not like my dreams, of course, and I had sense enough now not to expect them to be. But it was extra tough going in all of them. Shy seemed just as hot as Casey, and the beaches on Lake Michigan were jokes compared to the ones on the Pacific in Cal. I drove an asphalt wagon for a spell, and then lit out for Minneapolis. But I was disappointed again. And so I was in Denver, where I was fool enough to take a job like the one that had disgusted me in Minneapolis—trucking in a flour mill. I wintered in the Lake, and it certainly was a tough old winter. I had come to be one of the grouchiest and wickedest-tempered young boomers that ever knocked a soda-jerker loose from his girl; and I was forever fighting with the copper-miners from Garfield. The fighting was about the best thing I enjoyed, even if I did get some bad beatings. Still, Paddy the Devil wouldn't have been ashamed of me most of the time, and I'd no more than get one black eye than I'd be looking for another one. But I was never contented, and in the spring I pulled out.

I hoboed over the Western Pacific to Frisco. I landed there in the first week of May, with thirty dollars in my pocket, some rough experiences packed away in my mind, some fancy scars on my head and over my ribs, and a feeling that life wasn't nearly so funny and wonderful as I had used to think. And then I met Gager again.

It was among the slave markets on Howard Street that I first got news that Gager had just drove in from South America. It was two days before I found him. I looked around everywhere, but it seemed like he had disappeared. I searched through all the hangouts in town,

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winding up in the Thalia Dance Hall on the Barbary Coast one night and getting tangled up with a little Spaniola who had the kind of a wicked flash in her eyes that appealed to me quite a bit just then. As my luck seemed always bound to have it now, a burly young fireman from an oil tanker was sweet on her; and he tried to claw me away from this little devil of a Spaniola; and we had a short but exciting battle, which ended with one cop dragging him from under the table where I had bumped him, and with another chasing me down an alley.

I had a bruise under one eye, but my legs hadn't been hurt a particle, and I got away.

I bought a beefsteak and plastered it over my eye and had a good night's sleep. The next morning I had a fine breakfast of mush, three hot cakes, three eggs, two slabs of ham, a plate of French fried potatoes, three doughnuts and two cups of coffee, and the world looked quite merry and bright. My mind felt the effect of this, too, and before long I got a good idea about finding Gager. I remembered him so keenly now that it seemed like he was one of the best friends I had ever known. No one who met him could ever forget Gager. No one had been more talked about in the old camps. There had been a dozen different stories about his life and he was a hero in every one.

Well, the idea that came to me was to look for Gager in the library. And I started right out for it. It was about the first library I'd been in since I was a kid in Boise, and I'd never got used to such a place then. This Frisco library just about overcame me. There must have been a dozen rooms in it, and I roved around feeling absolutely lost until I came to one big room where books were stacked up by the thousands. There were a lot of people in this room fussing over the books, and bringing their selections up to a counter, where a gang

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of girls was working with rubber stamps. I stopped and peered around, looking for a sign of Gager, but I couldn't locate him. I was about ready to pull out, when a girl stepped in front of me and asked if she could help me find what I wanted.

The girl didn't have any too much flesh on her and she looked up very soberly through the specs which were clipped over her nose; but I saw that she was young and had thrown a glance or two at my powerful shoulders; so I gave them a heave and shook my head so that my hair would wave down with its best look and took a try at making this library girl come my way.

But it was no use. She just flushed up and said in a cold voice:

"Did you have anything particular in mind?"

"Sure," I came right back, thinking to kid her along a little, anyway, "I'm lookin' for Len Gager."

She rested one hand on a shelf of books, tapped her chin with a pencil and frowned.

"That must be a new one. I never heard of it."

"It's not an it," I laughed. "It's a him."

"You mean Len Gager is an author?"

"No, kiddo. He's just a team hand."

She looked so puzzled that I couldn't help it; I roared right out so loud that a fat woman a little way from us dropped three books which she had in her hand and stared like a Methodist.

"Sh!" The library girl frowned harder than ever and shook her pencil under my nose. "You startled everybody in the room. You must talk quietly. And you mustn't laugh."

I was ashamed of myself for laughing in a library, and I promised not to laugh any more and not to talk loud, either. Then I explained to her what a team hand was, and then I got to yarning about some of my hobo experiences, leaning on a row of books with my right

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elbow, and propping my left fist on my hip, except when I wanted to diagram with it. That library girl listened with her mouth open, I can tell you! Her eyes got wider around than her specs; and when I went to telling in an offhand way about some of the fights I'd been in, she backed off, gasped "Excuse me!" and away she skipped. She'd evidently never met up with a real burly before and didn't want to now. It was no use, and I'd known it from the first.

Gager wasn't there, so I thought I'd pull out. The library didn't appeal to me a particle. There was a kind of sleepy feel and dead smell in the room, with all the books stacked around, and the women sort of praying over them. They didn't allow laughing in there, and a man might as well spend his time in a church, for all the fun he could get out of a library. I rambled back to Howard Street as fast as I could go. I turned into the first saloon I came to and said a good morning to the bartender.

"Good mornin' at this time of day, and with an eye like that?" he said. "Good mornin' nothin'; it's whisky ye want!"

I just lay back and roared. The bartender looked tremendously pleased; he didn't realize that I wasn't laughing at his joke so much as for the fact that I felt good to be in a place again where I *could* laugh heartily without being called down for it.

"No, I'm after beer," I said. "But give me all the jokes you want to, for I'm in the humor for laughin'."

"You ought to been in here a w'ile ago, then. They was a guy here who called hisself Gager; and if you could of heard him you would of simply split your sides——"

"Gager! I been lookin' three days for him. Know where he went?"

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"You'll prob'ly find him down in the resternt. Not five minutes ago he said he was goin' for a Dutch lunch. But he's such a joker you can't——"

I didn't wait to finish my beer. Something had been working and stewing around in me ever since I heard Gager was in town, and that something had made me feel that if I could just tie up to him once, I'd stop chasing around in circles and get some real interest in life again. And now I went down the stairs to the basement restaurant as fast as I could go. At the bottom I stopped and looked around.

A dim light was sifted into the little restaurant through brown curtains over the lofty windows in front. The ceiling had heavy beams; and it had been brown once, but now it was a smoky black, with dingy yellow spots where the paint had scaled away. Lights were burning in brackets on the spotted and streaked walls, but still the room showed dimly. The fancy checks of the linoleum on the floor had been worn away, and there were splotchy gray trails between the tables and it looked like large gray blots under them. It was noon now, and laborers in their work clothes sat around, and there were some young fellows who appeared to be clerks, and all were eating cold lunches and drinking beer. Enough pipes and cigarettes were going to make a haze of smoke over the ceiling. It was really a pretty good place, and I felt free and easy in it.

My gaze traveled back to a table under a window. There was a splatter of gold sunlight on the bare unpainted surface of this table, coming from a rip in the brown curtain. I saw a hand holding a magazine with a bright cover. The hand moved the magazine away from the face, and I looked into the black eyes of Len Gager. We stared at each other for a ten-count, and then he knew me.

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"Appanoose Jim! I heard you were looking for me. This is very glorious."

Gager was up and shaking hands. I wasn't disappointed; it still seemed like I had known him forever as an old friend. Gager was lean now, and his face was tanned until it looked as black as a Mexican's. The lines about his restless eyes and nervous mouth were curved into that same old friendly smile, and it went right into me, just as it had when I was a kid. His voice was deep and rich as ever, and he spoke in the old singing way.

"The light of nobler days shines before me again!" Gager waved his right hand, then flipped it over his heart. "The shape of Paddy the Devil, as I live! The eye which is yellow but not black! The powerful shoulders! The bruised knucks! Aye, Paddy was a black devil and marked with some wrinkles of years, and you are young and yellow of head; but you have fulfilled your promise, Appanoose Jim! You are at least his golden shadow! *Camerado!* Thou art a man!"

I had Gager's right hand again now, and I squeezed it until he groaned. I hadn't felt so glad to see anyone in years. Just to look at him now made me feel like another man. It must have been a full minute before I could say a word; I just squeezed his hand and looked at him. He was wearing a classy blue serge suit and a white silk shirt. But he had no necktie; the shirt was open at the collar. Gager was still true to the old rules and regulations. I was a little ashamed of my own stylish rig.

"Well, where you been keepin' yourself?" I asked finally.

"All over, little one. Mine is the story of a worker wandering in far places. From Panama to the Andes I have toiled away these years. But you, Appanoose Jim —say you are not shorn and quenched. The tribe is

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broken, and many—but of them we shall talk later. The size, the shape, the look of the great dark devil—these you have, Appanoose Jim; but what of the spirit? Something says you have settled into the drab rut of city labor. How are you?"

"I had at least seven good battles with copper-miners in the Lake last winter," I said.

"The last few sparks of a dying fire!" Gager hugged the magazine to his chest and waved his right hand. "Once the banners of adventure fluttered and shone all over the West; one by one they have been hauled down; and now the big jobs are all done and adventure smothers in the smoke and dust of civilized industry. What are we to do, you burly battler, you, and I, a surviving bard of the glorious times? To the Andes we must go, to Alaska, to Panama, away from our home soil. But enough of this. I'm drunk and Byronic."

"Let's eat something and you'll get out of your doldrums," I said.

"Paddy's very own words," said Gager, in his natural voice. He led the way back over to his table, the laborers and the clerks watching him curiously. "Shall we have something spicy and hot and wash it down with wine, or shall we have something spicy and cold and wash it down with beer?" he asked, after we had sat down.

"It makes no difference to me," I said. "Just talkin' about eatin' makes me hungry, and when I'm good and hungry anything'll do."

"The very answer the great dark devil himself would have made," chuckled Gager.

Then he bawled for the waiter, and in a little bit we had a big layout of cold, juicy clams, pickled herring, rye bread and pumpernickel, cold ham and white cream cheese. Every bite we ate seemed to call for half a glass of beer; and we had got away with two quarts after

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we'd been eating for about an hour and decided to call it a meal. I had no other notion than to lean back in my chair, puff on a cigarette and enjoy that peaceful, contented feeling that comes when you have eaten like you ought to. But Gager, who had stopped talking to eat every once in a while, now went in for talking altogether.

"There's a worry in your eyes," said Gager. "Let's hear your story."

I told him, as well as I could, of all I had been through; how I had been put upon and deceived by women in Loss and had been batting around without any purpose in life ever since.

"Women have been your only trouble, then," said Gager. "You are free from the weariness of books. All's well."

"If books can be any worse than women, I'd like to know how," I said.

"I could tell you," said Gager. "But never mind. Let me think of your problem. You have brought me a new feeling, a new mood, a new urge. I would save your soul again."

He was silent for a spell, blinking up at the ceiling, and then he smiled.

"The woods, Appanoose Jim. Ah, the green woods, the tall timber, the keen air, the lusty life!"

He motioned for the waiter to bring us some more beer, then he pulled the magazine from his pocket and opened it on the table.

"I am tormented with an idea. You, Appanoose Jim, can never realize what torment an idea can give a man. The restless nights, the dreary days. But you shall know this idea, and maybe we'll share it together."

We drank again.

"See the pictures," said Gager.

I turned the magazine around and looked in the

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opened pages. There were some photographs of a big mountain, with clouds of smoke rolling up from its peak, and the name of this mountain was Lassen. There had been some stuff in the newspapers about an erupting volcano in Northern Cal, but I had never paid much attention to it. The shadows of Gager's long fingers fell on the pictures of the smoking mountain as he waved his hand over them.

"Lassen! A noble word! Listen to me say it loud and slow, with the best musical expression: Lassen! Lassen! A grand word, a royal name; fit for a white-water river or a great lake; fit indeed for an august mountain; and for a volcano—superb!"

It *was* a fine name; anybody could see that; and I said so.

"I've seen a volcano or two," Gager went on more quietly, "but I have never seen one with a name that appealed to me much, and I've never worked by one. Here's the idea: in the woods of Northern Cal is a volcano with a noble name; and what could be more right and proper than for men like us to labor around it for a season? What's the odds if we're on a big job or not? Just to be able to tell that you had labored around Lassen, to have seen it spouting black smoke by day and crimson fire by night, to have heard the wonderful tales of the natives around—that strikes me as a thundering idea. Drink the rest of your bottle and then tell me what you think of laboring around Lassen for the summer."

I downed my beer and thought the matter over. And I decided the idea had quite a bit to it. For one thing, I felt more than ever like I wanted to stick to Gager. Then, I'd been sick and tired for a long time of the dog's life I'd been leading, always looking for something that would make life interesting, and never finding it; and this idea looked more like the good old times I had

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dreamed about. Then, again, I was weary of fooling around with women, though I could never leave them alone. Very likely there wouldn't be many women around that volcano. So I told Gager I was perfectly willing to go with him and labor around Lassen.

"But what kind of a job will we get?" I said. "There won't be any jobs right close, will they?"

"Oh, the jobs," said Gager. "We'll just ship up to the sugar-pine country around there and be loggers for a spell. I've logged in other seasons—it was in a logging camp that piece was chewed from my ear—and we'll get on. It may be that we'll strike a big timber job. The railroads are built; but see the forests of the West, my son—there the big jobs grow. From Minnesota and the Lake States come the timber beasts, and they come from a famine, but here in the West they fatten and grow big. Huge red sawmills are blooming in new paint from the redwoods here to the forests of Alaskan spruce. The greatest log harvest of all time is begun. Century-old crops are falling on the slopes of a thousand Western mountains. But that is my part of the idea, Appanoose Jim. Yours is to become again the young burly whose heart is set around the jewel of adventure.

"Ah, I am romantic. Ever romantic, so damn romantic. It is my fate. But in liquor I am rhetorical also. Romantic and rhetorical. Ah, *camerado*, there are mists about."

I hadn't noticed that we had been drinking so much, but then Gager was somewhat swacked before I met him. He slumped down now and stared into his empty glass. His hair had got considerably mussed, and some of it straggled down from under his hat and lay on his forehead. I was sorry to see him this way, as I had hoped we could go out and make a night of it before going up to labor around Lassen. But Gager seemed to be far

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gone, all of a sudden. I thought he ought to get somewhere and sleep for a while.

"Well, Gager," I said, reaching over and fetching him a solid lick on the shoulder, "what you say we go up to my room and get ready for this Lassen trip? Shall we hobo 'er?"

"Lassen, oh, noble word." Gager looked up rather dully. "Lassen—it will be very glorious to labor around Lassen."

Then he straightened up, gave his shoulders a hard shake, stared restlessly around the restaurant, which had only the sloppy-looking waiter and three or four half-stewed laborers in it now, and then he glared at me in such a grim way that it made me a little hostile. Then he looked down at his hands, which were gripping the edge of the table.

"Lassen!" he growled in a low voice to himself. "What damn foolishness! What else is in the world? Yearners and seekers amongst rubbish and smoke are we romantic men."

"Looky here, Gager," I said very firmly. "You've simply drunk so much beer you're in the doldrums, and you ought to have sense enough left to know it. Most guys would think you was nuts, hearin' you go on this way, and they'd ditch you quick. But I'm not that kind. I've been in the tribe and I know what you are. You need comp'ny. You need lookin' after, in some ways. And you're in one of them ways now. You come on out of here with me, or I'll break your neck."

Gager looked sullen for a little bit, then he laughed and made a try at pulling himself together.

"Well said, son." He got up from the table. I got up with him and put out a helping hand. "Never mind. My legs are good. And my heart feels better. Well said. Damn me, but I'd forgot the great dark devil.

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You are indeed his golden shadow. I heard his voice then.

"Come now," said Gager. "There is a slave market up the street a block, and there we can sign to be shipped for labor near Lassen. Let us make ready. I shall sleep my doldrums away. To-night we'll be rolling northward with merry hearts. To Lassen! Up now to the slave market. *Allons!*"

You may be sure that it made me feel fine to hear him talk in this reasonable way. He had brought many of my old exciting feelings back again, and I wanted to stick with him. As the team hands had always said, there was nobody else like Gager, and there never could be. Not in this day and age, anyhow.

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XXI

"LASSEN smokes!"

Gager yelled in my ear and gave me a dig in the ribs. We were bouncing along on a logging train. It was rough riding, but I had dozed off. I had slept poorly in the smoker, coming from Frisco the night before. Now the afternoon sunlight was golden and warm. The earth was moist and green around and tickling smells steamed up from the soil. The sky was blue. The air was clear. And it made me drowsy to look at the lazy waving boughs of the pines.

"Lassen smokes!"

I roused up when Gager roared again.

"Take your first look at the smoke of Lassen, Appanoose Jim. What do you see? Smoke and no more. But ask me what my eyes behold. I see a hell-cave. A squat red devil is hidden under the hill and he is sticking his long black tongue straight up at the sunny blue of heaven above!"

Well, I didn't have an imagination anything like that, and I wasn't going to pretend that I did. The column of smoke looked to me just like a big stovepipe sticking out of the mountain, and I said so. But it was an interesting sight. The black column rose straight up, slowly, clean-cut on its top and sides, for what must have been a thousand feet; then a hard wind seemed to strike it and it rolled away into a thick coaly smudge against the blue sky. The smudge grew into a cloud that spread over a range of snowy peaks near Lassen; and pretty soon the cloud looked more like a thunderstorm booming up from the southeast than anything else.

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I got tired of looking at Lassen after a while and began to notice other features of the country.

The logging engine was hauling its string of empties up a wide, timbered valley. It was fired with wood and its white smoke came back over us in little rushing clouds. These clouds had a smell to them that mixed pleasantly with the odors of the sugar pines and the cedars and the moist earth. And, drowsy as I was, it gave me a comfortable lazy feeling to look up at Mt. Shasta, which was much nearer to us than Lassen; the rocks and snows of the grand mountain appeared so calm, silent and altogether peaceful and restful that they appealed to me much more than the black, stormy sight of Lassen. But Lassen had certainly excited Gager.

"Lassen smokes!" he kept shouting. And then he would take his hat in his left hand and hold it over his heart, and wave with his right hand, while he orated something like this:

"What is the message, I ask, of yonder smoky presence, which darkens mountains and forests with its black shadow? Is the secret of life's passionate mystery to be discovered there? Mayhap this volcano is a mirror of the eternal terror. Life will perish by fire! You feel it in your soul when you look on Lassen! Burning pits, caves of fire; snows of hot ashes and boiling streams from the lakes of hell—by the fire we shall perish! Don't you know it now?"

Lord, but how he did put it on! His deep voice rolled out above the chugging of the engine and the rattle of the train. I figured he had been pumping away too much at the quart of whisky he had brought along from the logging town, and I determined to take it from him at the first chance.

There was another man on the train with us, an unshaven logger who had been about half-drunk when he left town. He had seemed to be asleep most of the time;

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but when Gager started talking about hell he sat up and scowled.

"Shet up," he said now, in a very cranky voice. "You talk like a Holy Roller. You make me shiver."

"You've heard nothing yet," said Gager, speaking naturally. "Just listen to this."

Then he stood up on the floor of the swaying car, reached his hand out towards Lassen, and started to shout something grand; but just then the train whirled around a curve, and I had to grab Gager to keep him from being pitched off on his head. I pulled him down and jerked the bottle out of his pocket; we had an argument about it; but finally he agreed I was right and promised to sit down and talk sense for the rest of the trip. The other man butted in just once.

"Say, what ails you anyhow?" he asked, in a mean grouchy way that showed he was just beginning to sober up.

"Hallucinations," said Gager, very solemnly.

"Oh," said the other, looking puzzled.

He thought hard for a minute, then he growled:

"You keep 'em to yourself, then, or I might knock 'em out of you!"

"You can't," said Gager, holding me back.

"I can't, hey! Hell-fire! I'd like to know why I can't!"

Gager stared hard at the other man.

"Because of my intellectual superiority."

"Oh," was all the burly said.

"And that's the way *I* lick 'em," said Gager to me.

Then Gager and I stretched out side by side, with our heads resting on our suitcases, and Gager put off all his struts and talked sensibly, being his real self.

He did mention a few famous volcanoes at first. He said that volcanoes had always appealed tremendously to his imagination and——

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"Looky here, Gager," I broke in, "you know well enough I ain't got any imagination to speak of; and I've never read about any volcanoes and don't expect to; and I'm not particularly interested in any volcano, either, except Lassen, and only in it because it'll be excitin' to work around a volcano once. So let's talk about this job we are goin' to, just for a change."

"All right," said Gager, with a laugh. "We'll talk about the job, then."

We had been sent out from the town office of the Gale River Lumber Company to work in their big-wheel camp, Number Five. Gager had given the logging superintendent a spiel that was so gally I had blushed to hear him speak it. He said he was known as Topper Bill in the Washington country; he told, with a bare face, about the long stretches he had worked as a top-loader in the Coast donkey camps; and that superintendent let all his slick yarns slide down and agreed to send him out to load for the jammer at Number Five, where the top-loader had just quit. I was to go along and get the first chance at a big-wheel team.

"How do you have the nerve to tackle a particular job you know nothin' about?" I asked Gager now.

"Certainly I know something about it! Didn't I tell you I had my ear chewed off in a logging camp? I put in two years in the Minnesota woods when I was a fuzz-face. Gazoony as I was, I went to top-loading in my second year. I might have kept at it if I hadn't gone to Minneapolis to winter—well—with Wallace the Goldfish. Let that pass. Just you don't worry. I know the loading of logs. But now I'll tell you about the big-wheels and how to drive 'em."

Gager went on then to explain about the wheels in this camp; they were old-fashioned stiff-tongues, the superintendent had said; and, according to Gager, this kind was the hardest for a teamster to handle. The

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wheels would be ten or twelve feet high, with a heavy chain fastened to one side of the big axle, and a toggle on the other. A springboard was fastened loosely to the axle, its end sticking far out behind, and a peavey handle was set solidly in the axle by the springboard. When the teamster went out with empty wheels, the team was hitched astraddle the tongue, which was carried up in a neck yoke, like a wagon tongue. The wheels were driven through swamped-out roads to wherever logs had been bunched into loads; they were backed over a load pointed out by the wheel-loaders; the doubtletrees were unloosed and the team was driven up ahead of the tongue; a long, light chain was looped around the end of the tongue; one loader mounted the springboard, grabbed the peavey handle and swung down with all his weight until the end of the board was rooted in the ground. The .wheels were then ready for loading, the tongue straight up in the air, the long chain dangling down from its high end and hooked in the doubletrees. The toggle man then ran the heavy axle chain through a hole under the load, toggled it, and the teamster drove his horses slowly ahead. As the tongue was pulled down, the axle turned the toggled chain and the load was lifted from the ground. Then the loaders held the tongue down, the teamster threw back the light chain, and with it the tongue was bound to the front end of the load. Then the doubletrees were hooked up to the end of the tongue and the load was hauled down to the jammer.

Gager could just make you see the big-wheels being loaded, the way he told it; and I thought how fine it would be if he would always yarn away about interesting things like loading big-wheels and driving them. He couldn't talk about anything better, to my mind.

"When you ramble down and away with your load, then's when you'll have your fun, Appanoose Jim," said

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Gager. "You've skinned your twelve mules, six abreast on a grading machine; you've steered your six-up over the smooth asphalt of a city street, the brakes solid on the wheels at a hill, your mules strong in the breeching. But here there'll be no brakes and no breeching, and you'll have to hold your load back with skill. Nothing but skill."

"Don't you worry, Gager. I won't take a back seat to any teamster anywhere on any kind of teamin', once I get the hang of the job. I got the knack."

Gager lay silent for a minute, his eyes closed against the sunlight and a real contented smile on his face. He reached into his pocket, got out his tobacco and pipe, and had the blue smoke streaming out behind us before he went on talking.

"Don't be too pernickety, Appanoose Jim. Whatever you may think of your knack for teaming, don't be too pernickety about this job. It's dangerous, I tell you; it scars and it scrunches many a man. There's the overbalanced load. The wheels run up on the horses. A snort, a twist, a lunge, and away! Down the swamped road that winds amongst stumps and trees. Brush to the right of you, brush to the left of you. Swing to the left now! Back to the right! Haw! Yo! Hup! You hock-dragging dust-makers, you! Grind and smash the brush, you load of logs, you! But you're slowed down. Swing wide on this sharp turn around the big snag; make the brush here, teamster, or, by the holy old mackinaw, it's loping and leaping for you down the pitch ahead! This pitch, with trees and stumps on each side —steep—steep—no brush here! Straight going, and the horses must outrun the load. And, hanging to the lines, you must keep up, making twenty feet at a jump. Maybe you're not quick and fast enough, Appanoose Jim; maybe the team goes wild and loose; the nigh wheel swings into a stump or a tree, with you between! The

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wheels don't often cripple a man, but seven teamsters were taken dead out of the woods the season I top-loaded. You've never drove anything yet, Appanoose Jim!"

This was something like! This certainly *was* interesting talk. I could get ten times as excited over this as I could over Lassen, and I wanted Gager to go on talking about the big-wheels. But his pipe had gone out, and he sat up to light it. Then he got to looking at the spreading black cloud of the volcano, and before long he was more than putting it on and orating with fancy words again. I gave him up and paid no more attention to what he was saying; I just sort of drowsed down and thought about the big-wheels and what an interesting job I was likely to have for the summer. I felt very comfortable and let my mind wander any lazy old way it wanted to.

Gager and I had bought ourselves new outfits in Galeburg, and I felt mighty good in mine. I looked down at my feet, and the black calked boots which had cost me eight dollars looked fine and strong. My legs about filled the new blue overalls, which I had stagged at the tops of the boots. Lying the way I was, my chest bulged up so that I could not see my waist, but the green of a new wool shirt had a handsome look there in front of my eyes. I liked to open and shut my right fist and watch the sleeve tighten up and then wrinkle from the movements of my arm muscles. I was proud of my shoulders and bulging muscles. I couldn't help but be. They always felt and looked good to me, and I always enjoyed them.

The train rolled along. I got to dozing again. The rattle of the car wheels over the steel rails and the chugging of the engine made a kind of sleepy music. Every so often I would see Gager wave his hand and hear him shout: "Very glorious!" but I wasn't noticing him much. The grouchy logger was asleep and rolled back

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and forth with the movements of the car. And I guess I was doing the same way after a while; for I went to sleep, too, and dreamed about driving a big-wheel down the side of Lassen, while the smoke of the volcano made everything around me darker and darker.

I didn't wake up until we pulled into camp. And it was dark then. The sun had gone down, and the cloud of smoke had spread over half the sky.

"Behold it still!" Gager cried, as we got off the car. "Lassen smokes!"

The grouchy logger was grouchier than ever. His eyes were bloodshot, and his hair hung in greasy strings over them, making him look wild.

"I told you once to shet up that fool talk, and I meant it!" he snarled out. "Holy old mackinaw, have I got to listen to such stuff? No I ain't, and I ain't a-goin' to."

I was ready to take a poke at him just for luck, but Gager held me back. He took one long step and threw a fierce, black glare into the grouchy logger's eyes, his own not six inches away.

"Look you here, my man!" Gager's voice sounded low and deep, but he just cracked out his words. "Look here, my man! Have you forgotten my intellectual superiority?"

"Oh, *it!*" the grouchy logger mumbled. "What does *it* amount to? Hell-fire, I ain't never been skeered of one yet. And yours don't skeer me none, neither. Hell-fire!"

But he walked away from Gager, all the same, and never snarled another word at him.

Number Five was a tent camp; each tent had board floors and walls; there was a stove, a table and a lamp in each one, and three single beds, with springs, mattresses and blankets.

The bull cook found a tent where Gager and I could

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be together, then he said we'd better ramble to the cookhouse, as supper was nearly over. I sized up the country around as we tramped along.

The tents, about fifty in number, were in rows among a stretch of big pine trees on the bottom slope of a long, low ridge. Below the tents was the logging railroad, and below the railroad was the cookhouse. Beyond was a reach of flat cut-over land. This land was covered with a thick growth of manzanita; and in the brush stumps stuck up like bruised black thumbs; and there were many broken and splintered young trees, dead long ago. There were a few young trees left alive, but they were scattered around and each one had a lonesome look. About a mile out in the slashings was a great green circle of trees, and inside the circle shone the waters of a lake. A range of hills loomed far beyond; the dark was closing in, but you could still see stumps and a wreckage of logs and young trees on the hills, and deep furrows running down the slopes. The hills had been logged off by donkey engines; and hundreds of logs dragged down to the railroad by the ground lead system had made the wreckage and plowed the furrows. It had certainly been a tough log harvest over there.

The cookhouse was a real building, wide, low and unpainted. There were five long tables inside, and three flunkies were cleaning them off, making a sharp racket as they scooped the tin dishes into tubs. I was sorry we were late, for I was hungry, and I did not expect to feed very well on the leavings of the loggers' supper. Gager and I stopped and waited to be shown to some places. Just then the growliest bass voice I ever heard rumbled up the room.

"Yay, there, you savages! Are you eatin' or ain't you eatin'? Here y'are!"

Then I saw a pink bald head shining down at the end of a table, and under the pink bald spot was a pair of

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yellow eyebrows, so shaggy that they almost hid a pair of little gray eyes; and under the eyes was a crooked nose, and a yellow mustache that bulged out and flowed down until it covered the mouth, chin and all of whoever it was; and below the amazing mustache was a pair of shoulders which were even wider than mine, and a chest that looked like a fat man's stomach lifted up under his neck.

"Here y'are, bullies!"

A huge, red, hairy, knotted hand waved at us, and we rambled fast. The hand waved us to seats across the table.

"I'm the Little Bull," rumbled the wide man. "I don't give a peavey prong who you burlies are, if you know team loggin'. Set down." Then he turned and bellowed towards the kitchen. "Two more 'T bones, Joe!" Then he saw the grouchy logger dragging down the line. "Make 'er three!

"What are you out fer?" the Little Bull asked Gager, holding up such a red, juicy chunk of steak on his fork that my mouth simply dribbled.

"I'm Topper Bill from the Coast donkey camps," said Gager, without batting an eye. "I'm out to top-load for your jammer."

"Hr-r-r-r-mph!" The Little Bull was chewing the steak down.

"And you," said the Little Bull to me, another chunk of steak on his fork, "what are you out fer?"

"A big-wheel team," I said, in what was almost a whisper, it made me so weak to watch that juicy steak disappear under his mustache.

"Hr-r-r-r-mph!" The Little Bull chewed three times, swallowed, and then said: "You'll have to go buckin' till a team job's open." Then to the grouchy logger: "And you, you uncurried savage, what are you out fer?"

"Anything you got, of course," growled the grouchy

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logger. "What you askin' me such a scissor bill question fer? Hell-fire! Ain't you bull of the woods? Ain't I jest a plain logger? And he asks me what did I come out fer. Hell-fire."

"Hr-r-r-r-mph! You'll go swampin', my bully."

"Of course I will. What else could I expect? I always do. You don't need to tell me I will. Hell-fire, no!" said the grouchy logger bitterly. And then he went on growling: "Ain't we never goin' to get nothin' to eat? Say, Baldy, why don't you wake your stomach robber up once in a while? I'll starve to death. Hell-fire!"

The Little Bull held a chunk of steak on his fork and seemed to stare at the grouchy logger. It was hard to tell if he was staring, for his mustache was drawn up and his eyebrows were drawn down until they almost covered his face around his nose. I noticed that the pink on the Little Bull's head had turned to red. The grouchy logger started to say something else, but just then a flunky came in with our steaks and some bowls of fried potatoes, creamed cabbage and canned corn. I started eating right away and forgot everything else until I saw the grouchy logger hold his big T bone up on his fork and then fling it down on the floor. He got up and jumped on it with his calked boots and yelled "Hell-fire!" a couple of times. He started to yell it a third time; but by then the big, knotty hand of the Little Bull was around his neck and choked down the words.

The Little Bull swung the grouchy logger back down to his seat, picked up the steak with his free hand and threw it on the plate.

"Eat 'er," said the Little Bull.

And the grouchy logger did eat it as fast as he could.

Then, still holding to the grouchy logger's neck, the Little Bull picked up the tin plate and shoved it into the man's mouth.

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"Now, you hell-firin', steak-stompin' savage, you—eat —that!"

The grouchy logger sputtered and choked and squirmed, but it was no use.

"Chaw on 'er, you grizzly!"

And then the grouchy logger started in, and he did chew on the plate a good five minutes, and hard enough to leave some scars on it, too.

Then the Little Bull hauled him to the door as easily as though he was dragging a peavey along and heaved him outside.

"I was jest goin' to tell you," said the Little Bull, sitting down to his plate again and spearing the last of his steak, "I was jest goin' to tell you to report to me in the commissary immejutly after breakfast. And now we will say no more. I run my camp in the old Minnesota style which calls it bad manners to talk at the table. Neither talk nor perform, but jest eat hearty, like good bully boys."

And we certainly did. I ate steak, fried potatoes, corn and cabbage until I could hardly swallow, but still I managed to cram down three sizable wedges of chocolate cake. The Little Bull was gone long before I was done and Gager had to wait quite a spell after he was through.

"She's a real camp," he said, after we were outside. "An old-time bull of the woods and a noble cookhouse. We shall labor very pleasantly around Lassen. The summer will be very glorious."

I was enjoying the fine supper under my belt; the white tents of the camp looked warm and restful in the twilight among the pines; and the breeze that drifted along had a mountainy freshness in it and smelled of the pines and of spring. It seemed like I hadn't felt such peace in years. I was mighty glad to be away from the rush and the racket of cities and not be tormented

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by the blamed women for a while. And I wasn't lonesome, with Gager around. I certainly was thankful that I had met him.

It was early when I crawled into my cot. I went to sleep right away. Gager had gone to look up the second loader and get the facts on his job. I roused up when Gager came in. Through the open flap of the tent I could see a glow of fire over Lassen.

"The devils are making a night of it," said Gager.

I didn't say anything. The wind was rustling through the pine boughs over the tent. A horse whinnied from the camp corral. I whiffed the smell of smoke from Gager's pipe. And then I went to sleep for the night.

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XXII

BUCKING felled trees into logs sixteen feet long was new work for me, and, husky though I was, it nearly laid me out at first. Most of the fallers and buckers were working by contract, getting fifteen cents per thousand for falling and twenty-five for bucking. But as I was in line for a big-wheel team, I was put to work at two dollars and a half a day. I wasn't supposed to work extra hard, but I wanted to make good on the job, so I tore right into it. Well, it seems easy enough at first to drag a bucking crosscut saw through the kerf in a green pine tree and to shove it back again—shove and pull, shove and pull for from five minutes to half an hour at a stretch, depending on the size of the log; but when you are not used to the work your shoulders will get to aching, and your arms will get numb, and the muscles of your back will knot up. But still you keep going, even when you hit a pitch pocket and the saw drags so hard that you simply ache through and through, and your eyes are fairly swimming in sweat, and your soaked underclothes stick to you all over, and your hair is in thick strings, each one dripping sweat over your hot face, and the sun burns the back of your neck, and you chew on your tongue and pant—I'll tell you when you're not used to bucking life gets to seeming a mighty serious and solemn proposition along about four o'clock in the afternoon. The water jug is nearly always about empty then, and the coal oil has been about all used up on the pitch pockets, and you are feeling lank inside. You don't see how you can stand the last two hours. But you nearly always do.

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I got broken in after a couple of days, and then I could have bucked as much as any of the contractors, if I had wanted to. But that wouldn't have been right, so I just eased down and did no more than an honest day's work. Gager got along on his loading job with no more than a little trouble to begin with, so it looked like we were all set for the summer. His first trouble came from him stopping in his work to look at Lassen and orate about the volcano; he lost several logs off the cars simply because he stopped to wave his hand and yell "Very glorious!" when he should have been directing the jammer engineer. But then he got as interested in his work as I was in mine; and when Lassen had one of its biggest eruptions, just a week after we came to camp, Gager didn't notice it until the smoke had blackened the sky. I didn't notice it even then. I was too busy with bucking.

I learned to like bucking in all but its lonesomeness. The buckers worked far apart, each one having his own station. Ahead of us were the limbers and fallers; the green trees of pine, fir and cedar always in front of them. The firs were left standing, for they were rotten-hearted in that part of the country. The young pines and cedars were left standing, too; and they had a chance in this kind of logging, which smashed up nothing but brush. Behind the buckers worked the swampers with brush hooks and axes; behind them worked the bunching teamsters, rolling the logs into loads; and then the bigwheels worked along, carrying the loads of logs down to the railroad landing, where the steam jammer hoisted them to flatcars under the direction of Len Gager.

The grouchy logger had a hard time of it with the swampers, getting into two fights and being licked twice. The Little Bull had just come up when a third fight started, and he roared out: "You get licked and you'll log 'er down the line and over the hump! Paw 'm and

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stomp 'm and swing yer fists and feet hard, my bully, or, by all the holy old Mikes and Marias, you'll be wrote out a walk! That's the larrup, you wire-eyed Wobbly!"

The other swamper was big, but he was some kind of a black foreigner, and the grouchy logger finally whipped him.

I was bucking a log close down at the time. I saw the Little Bull's chin moving under his mustache, and I supposed he was grinning to see the grouchy logger win. He pulled off his grease-spotted mess of a black hat and held it on his hip, while he swabbed his red bald spot with a bandanna. His shaggy eyebrows came down in a frown.

"I swear I don't know what to do with you now," he said to the grouchy logger, who was wiping the blood from his nose. "I thought sure you'd get licked and I could send you over the hump. But you didn't. Well, you're too ornery to get on with the swampin' gang, that's plain. I'll have to put you buckin', I guess."

"I supposed you would," said the grouchy logger. "Hell-fire! I knew that was what you was aimin' to do all the time. But that's all the good it'll do you. Every place I go they try to put me buckin'. I'm sick and tired of buckin' and I've swore off of it this summer. I'll jest keep on swampin'."

"And fightin'," said the Little Bull. "But you are a brush-hookin' fool, I got to admit. You will work and work hard, I do have to say. But you will hell-fire around and fight. And that won't do in a swampin' gang ay-tall. You hold yerself down fer the rest of the day and I'll try and figger you out a job to suit."

"I'd like to go fallin'," said the grouchy logger. "But would you let me have a job I liked? No; I should say not. Hell-fire!"

"How you could fall and get along with your fallin'

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partner, I don't see," said the Little Bull. "But you're a work horse, I got to admit. I'll figger on it."

And figure he did, swabbing his head for a while, then putting his bandanna in his pocket and running his thick red fingers through his mustache until it hid his nose. He stared for a while at the grouchy logger, who was hacking brush like a demon, then he walked away, shaking his head, his big hands stuck in the pockets of his stagged pants.

Well, the next morning I was taking it easy on a fresh log, limbering up my sore muscles, when I saw the Little Bull come tramping through the brush like he was a baby elephant; and there was the grouchy logger following with a saw, a falling ax and a sack of wedges over his shoulder. The Little Bull was carrying the inner tube of a Ford tire and an iron stake and a maul. He stopped at the first standing sugar pine, mauled the stake into the ground, cut the tube, and then tied one end to the iron stake. He fastened the other end to the saw with a nail, and rumbled at the grouchy logger:

"Now, you timber-hackin' savage, go to 'er!"

The grouchy logger got a cut started with short strokes, then he began sawing. When he pulled, the rubber tube held the saw steady as it stretched; when he shoved, it helped to bring the saw back through the kerf. The tube did make a falling partner, though it took a strong pull to stretch it to the tree.

"Now!" boomed the Little Bull. "Old Paul hisself couldn't've invented a better partner fer a grouchy logger. I hope yer satisfied. You *gotta* be satisfied. If I ketch you in a rumpus now, I won't send you over the hump; I'll jest nacherly take and knock yer nose clean down to yer navel! See if I don't!"

Then he tramped away, the brush cracking under his big feet. The grouchy logger made a scowly face after

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him, then grabbed his falling ax and made the chips fly as he notched the tree. Now he went to sawing again. It was certainly a tough graft. In a little bit there were spreading stains of sweat under the logger's suspenders, and his red neck glistened with wet where the sunlight struck it. Once in a while he would stop and shake his fist at the inner tube and yell: "Yer ridin' the saw, rubberman! Yer ridin' the saw and it ain't fair to yer pardner! Next thing you'll be draggin' yer feet. Hell-fire! You quit ridin' that saw."

Then he would tie into the sawing harder than ever. He was like a wet rag that night, but he had fallen two-thirds as many feet of timber as any one team of contractors on the job. That fellow stuck on this job all summer and fall. And he kept up the same lick, making big money. After a while no one paid any more attention to his cranking, and he got along with the gang. As for his rubberman partner, that invention of the Little Bull's was certainly a noble one. In another season it was being used by falling contractors as far North as the Montana pine country.

That grouchy logger was a sample of the men called "work-simple" on Western jobs. They are usually gaunt and nervous from overstrain at hard work. They always tear into a job for all they are worth, and usually they are yelling their heads off about it all the time, too. They are hard to please, miserable to get along with; and they make it bad for the plain, steady pluggers who just aim to do an honest, comfortable day's work and not wear themselves out and lose all enjoyment in life.

Most of the loggers at Number Five worked honestly for the Little Bull, but never strained themselves, and were always in shape to enjoy a hearty supper in the evening and stories around the smudge fire at night. When I was well broken in to bucking I liked this logging life about as well as any I'd ever known. The grub

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there couldn't be beat in any camp, and I always felt fine inside, except during the last hour before dinner and the last hour before supper. Of course a man is always lank then, if he's doing an honest day's work. I'd buck away, hardly realizing I was working, my arms and hands pulling and shoving the saw at a steady rate, my mind sort of drowsing around through the days when I was a city laborer and tormented so much by women. Those times had suddenly seemed to be very far away. Every so often I'd cut through a log, then I'd move the saw, take a swig from my water bottle, wipe off the sweat, take a look up at the sky, and a couple of looks at Lassen, if the volcano happened to be smoking; then I'd bite off a chew and start sawing again, peaceful and contented, just sawing and chewing away in the shade of a green tree, or in the sunlight of an open space, my thoughts drowsing around. It seemed like it might keep on being that way forever, and I wished it would. But, for some reason, it never does.

The evenings, of course, were the best times. When I heard the jammer whistle toot, I'd shoulder my saw and bottles and tramp down through the brush to the swamped roads, where I'd join the other buckers, and we'd tramp along without saying much, the fallers and limbers coming behind. Ahead of us there would be a cloud of dust rising up from the feet of the big-wheel teams on their way to camp; and it would loom up like a gray shadow against the green hills and the sun which was about to touch their peaks. The tents would look dark and cool in the long shadows of the pines around when we got into camp. The bull cook swept the floors of the tents in the afternoons, and the boards would still be wet from sprinkled water, making a fresh smell.

Then it was roll up your sleeves, turn down your collar, fill the big basin jamful of cold water, and just souse yourself! It would feel so good to get the sweat and

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dust washed off, you would not care how much water you splashed. "R-r-r-r-wah!" the sweaty logger would growl as he dipped the water up in double handfuls and soused it into his eyes and ears. "R-r-r-r-um-tooey!" as he smeared on soap and got some into his mouth. Scrub! Scrub! Splatter! Splash! A good rinsing now; then purrs and sighs of pleasure as arms, neck and face are rubbed dry with a big rough towel. Then a comb and a brush and a wild gallop across the tracks as the supper gong rings.

I simply can't tell about those logging-camp suppers—the big graniteware platters and bowls steaming with steaks, potatoes and vegetables; the fruits, the cakes, the pies, the tubby pots of coffee; the loggers bent over their plates, never saying a word, but simply shoveling in the rich, tasty grub; the mountain air blowing coolly in through the cookhouse windows; the flunkies racing up and down; Joe Le Doux, the cook, grinning from the kitchen door, the Little Bull's head, which always turned from pink to red while he ate, shining in front of the cook's white apron—I simply can't tell about what noble eating we had there. I guess I tell too much about eating, anyway. But it's one of the biggest things in the life of a workingman.

After supper I would lie on my bed and smoke, talking to Gager if he was in the humor to talk sense, or just listening to him if Lassen had erupted that day, putting him in the mood to orate on how glorious it was to work around the volcano.

At twilight we would all come out of our tents and gang up around a smudge fire, for the mosquitoes would fly up from the lake then; and we would smoke and yarn away until bedtime. The old-time loggers were forever going it about Paul Bunyan and his big blue ox, always twisting the stories around to ridicule somebody or something, just as I had heard them from Snub Peters in Ley-

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dens' Oregon camp. Gager generally led the old-timers in the Paul Bunyan stories; usually he was the one who capped the climax, stringing one of the short stories out into a yarn that would last an hour or more.

The young loggers would talk a lot about women, and I could usually lead the conversation here. But I didn't very often want to. Women were not bothering me out here in the woods, and I didn't want to get to thinking about them. So I would listen to Gager yarn along in his rich, singing voice most of the time, only breaking in on the young loggers' talk when one of them would make an ignorant crack; like, for example, when a young wheel teamster said that he could always get along with a decent girl because he was kind, gentle and polite with such a one all the time. That was foolishness, of course, and I told him so. A woman is not a baby, I argued; she likes to play with a man, and have him rough-house her and show his muscle as long as he acts honest and decent. I *knew* this from my own experience, and the young teamster only had a theory that he had read in some love story; but he was a good arguer, and we got to yelling so loud that we broke up the Paul Bunyan services. But most nights it was peaceful around the smudge fire; and I would just lie propped on my elbow, and smoke, and listen to the old-timers, and look up through the trees at the stars.

Life went even better for me when I finally got a big-wheel team. A teamster was caught against a tree by an overbalanced load and smashed up so terribly that he died even before they got him to camp. I was given his team. It was dangerous, exciting work, just as Gager had said it would be; but my team was a good one, and I got along without much trouble from the very first. The Little Bull went by my side on my first trip. He watched me swing the load into the brush as I made the turn around the very tree where the other teamster was

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smashed, and he followed behind as I eased the load down to the hill to where the road ran on a level to the jammer.

"I don't need to tell *you* nothin'," he said, catching up again. "Jest you keep poundin' 'em on the tail and haul logs. You're jake with me fer the season."

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XXIII

It was on the day after the Fourth of July that I bumped into an idea which at once crawled into my mind, curled up and made its home there; and this idea was to be more or less of a torment to me from then on.

That's the way it goes: a man will get into a good place and be working along fine, peaceful and contented in his soul, sure that he's found comfort and happiness in life at last; then, bang! he bumps into something that gets right into him and stirs him up and shoves him out on a line of worry and struggle and torment that he had never figured on at all. It may be a woman you meet who starts you out this way; it may be some kind of new job you find that looks tremendously hard to handle but somehow hits you just right and rouses your ambition to conquer that job and make it your own; it may be religion that strikes a man; it may be just a plain idea about making the world do better, like the I.W.W. preach. Anyway, there's always something to rouse and stir you, tormenting you at the same time. You get over your young roving days, and you get over your women-chasing times, and you begin to get settled, feeling fine. But there's always some bother and trouble ahead. Part of getting settled in life is learning to expect this. You have to learn that, as long as you live, every so often you'll have to start suffering and sweating all over again.

It's like climbing a long hill; every so often the climber thinks he sees the top, and he feels mighty good to think the climb is done; then he sees that he is only mounting a hump, and that another slope looms ahead. It's amus-

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ing to read stories where the young hero wins out completely, holds life solidly in his splendid hand, and settles down with his woman to live happy ever after. It's amusing to read, but of course it is never so. In real life a man is never settled long until something catches him up and sends him panting and stumbling on. Or else he feels so weak and worn-out that he gives up and rolls back to the bottom. A man needs to learn not to hope too much or try too hard; don't speed up too much, and don't rest too much, either; just sit down and enjoy the scenery once in a while, then climb along some more, expecting always to see another slope looming over the next hump.

I had learned a lot of this from women, but still I was surprised and worried the way I was thrown up in the air over a job. I had just turned twenty-two, and of course it was natural for me to be taken by the idea of a job that might do me for life. I wasn't so cocky and proud any more; I was just doing my best to be rough and tough and get over the torment of my experiences in Loss; and the idea of working away, year after year, all the rest of my life, and the need of getting a job to suit, simply hadn't occurred to me. And when it did it came as a surprise, and as a worry, too. I guess it's hard on most young fellows when they first settle down to thinking of the future.

The big red sawmill in Galeburg had started cutting again on the day after the Fourth. The pond was full of logs and the camps were not due to start up until two days later. I had met a girl, the daughter of a Dago lumber-piler, but a nice, pretty girl all the same, at a dance on the night before the Fourth. I had stayed sober that night, and the next morning, also, for I had made a date to take her out to the picnic and the field sports and games. Besides, I was down for one of the boxing contests and I was on the loggers' tug-o'-war team. A

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man can always make a better showing at these kinds of sports when he has stayed sober. And I'd certainly made a good showing. I knocked my man out in the first round of the boxing contest; and the Little Bull liked to have knocked me down with a slap on the back when he told me that I was the best tugger he had ever anchored behind on a Fourth of July anywhere.

I had a good supper at the little Italian girl's home on the night of the Fourth. Her mother was a fine cook, and her father was far and away above the average black foreigner. She looked a lot like Tiva, and she was a gay little girl and strong in a rough-house besides. She had a job in the box factory and I walked to work with her the next morning. She was wearing a new pair of blue overalls and a lighter blue chambray work shirt. The overalls, turned up at the bottom, almost hid her little slippered feet. A cap was perched on one side of her dark curly head. That little Italian girl did look pretty and cunning. There's nothing can seem lovelier and more wonderful than a girl like her, even after you begin to feel old and serious. Of course I didn't get to feeling airy and swimmy and soft with her like I had with Tiva Fletcher; I was past that way with women; I just felt sort of highly satisfied and happy as I walked along with the little Italian girl and smiled and joked with her.

Well, after I'd left the little Italian girl at the box factory I went on up into the mill to watch the sawing. I had never been in a pine mill before, and I had really seen little sawing in the Douglas fir mills on the Coast. They sawed long logs there, running their carriages slowly with the cable system. They slabbed off big cants and let the edgers and resaws make the lumber.

But here, as in all the pine mills, the lumber was made at the head band saw. There were six head rigs in this mill, each one cutting around sixty-five thousand feet of

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lumber in ten hours. The logs were never more than twenty feet long, where the fir mills cut logs up to one hundred and twenty feet in length. The fir people sold green lumber mostly, big timbers especially; the pine men sold dried and dressed lumber for building houses, barns and the like. Here the shotgun feed system was used. A big shaft ran from each log carriage to a great long cylinder on the mill floor, and inside the cylinder the shaft was bolted to a piston. Steam forced into the cylinder furnished the power to run the carriages. They shot back and forth so fast that it looked like the doggers and the setters would be thrown off at every jerk.

I was watching the star sawyer of the mill. The last cant of a log was dropped on the steam-driven steel rolls and moved towards the edger. The carriage shot back, the dogger raising a steel hook by means of a lever as it came, the setter moving the head blocks back over the carriage floor by the power of an electric motor. The carriage came to a sudden stop in front of the log deck. The sawyer, in a cage between the log deck on his left and the shining band saw on his right, stepped on a foot-lever, and a sugar-pine butt, five feet in diameter and sixteen feet long, rolled off the deck and against the head blocks on the carriage. Now the sawyer jiggled, with his left hand, a rig like a peavey handle that stuck up from the floor; and as he jiggled it a steel beam with heavy teeth on its face shot up vertically between the deck and the carriage, fetched the log a lick that squared it against the blocks, and dived out of sight. The dogger and the setter snapped down on levers, and steel dogs held the log.

The sawyer's right hand moved another peavey handle that stuck up from the floor, and the carriage leaped towards the saw, seeming to slow down just the fraction of a second before the flashing teeth of the band bit into the bark. Then a long-drawn wailing song rose up.

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Up to this time it had just been noise in the mill to me, the noise of the other band saws and of the edgers, trimmers and slashers, but now I got my first thrill from mill music, the songs of the saws. I didn't know why it was, but I began to feel excited.

A slab of bark bounced away on the rolls. The sawyer had the carriage back and the band saw was singing again before the first slab was over three feet into the clear. Each time he hurled the log carriage back the sawyer signaled the setter with his left hand. And each time the motor was made to shove the head blocks out an inch. Two more cants rolled away. The sawyer's gaze seemed to get sharper now as the yellow sawn face of the log flashed back and forth in front of him. He was beginning to grade.

Half a dozen inch boards were sent down the rolls; the sawyer was now studying the face of the log with a frown, as the movements of his right hand made the carriage fly; I got more and more excited as I watched him; he looked like he was sorting out every mark of the grain, every knot, every pitch pocket in his mind, while his hands controlled tremendous power by a sort of instinct. And that's about the way it was. The sawyer's mind was at work grading the log, and he handled his levers without really thinking about them.

Another inch cant hit the rolls. The sawyer stiffened up, he made another signal, and the carriage-riders lifted their hooks; then the steel beam of the turner—the "nigger"—shot up, its teeth caught in the log, it flipped the sawn face over on the carriage floor, fetched the log a slap against the head blocks, and ducked down. Another slab of bark rumbled down the rolls. And the carriage had seemed to hardly stop at all while the sawyer was turning the log.

I must have watched him for two hours. He could not have been more than thirty years old. He was a

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well-set-up man, but he didn't seem to have any too much muscle. That was the only thing that I could see wrong about him. His face was about like any other workingman's face, lean and plain-looking; and he chewed tobacco; and his black hair was in a tangle under the old hat which was pulled down towards his left ear. But when this sawyer was sizing up the face of a saw log, and when his hands were jiggling the levers he stood between, he got an appearance in my eyes that made me feel small, miserable and absolutely no account. In fact, the sawyer got to be a hero to me right there, and his job made an impression on me that no job had made since the time when I first saw Paddy the Devil sling a slasher from a high-seat. But that was Paddy, and I was a kid then, with never a thought of the future.

Three small logs rolled down the deck. I could hardly believe my eyes when the sawyer, with one swipe of the nigger, piled all three against the head blocks. Then three slabs dropped off at once from the saw. The carriage shot back. It was brought to a full stop. Slowly the nigger was eased up, then its teeth fairly snapped all three logs over at once, banged their faces against the blocks, the hooks bit into the top logs, the nigger dived down, three more slabs rolled away, and three six-inch cants followed them. It looked amazing to me. It was wonderful. It seemed simply a miracle!

And suddenly I found I was so excited that I was declaring out loud: "By Godfrey, I'm goin' to be sawin' 'em that way some day! By Godfrey, I am! If I live a hunderd years, I'll never be satisfied until I'm a head sawyer and can saw three logs at a lick! I swear I won't!"

I couldn't be heard in the roar of the mill, but I must have been waving my hand, after the style of Gager, for I noticed the sawyer flashing a grin up at me. I felt foolish, then, and I rambled right away. But I was

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still excited and tremendously stirred up inside. The machines and saws of the big red mill seemed to be singing the noblest music I had ever heard. I looked at the sunlight pouring through the windows of the roof, I inhaled big chestfuls of the air which smelled so keenly of fresh-cut pine, I felt the cool breeze which rolled up the log slips from the mill pond tickle my face, and everything in and around that grand red sawmill that I heard, saw, smelled and felt seemed to be saying these words to me:

"The sawmill life is the one you'll finally know, Jim Turner! Nothing else'll ever satisfy you now, big boy! A sawdust savage with the hope of a head sawyer's job is what you're bound to be, old-timer!"

And when I was out in the streets of the mill town again I had almost forgotten the little Italian girl.

So there it was again.

But don't think I jumped right in and tried to get a sawmill job, with the idea of working up to a head sawyer's place in a short two years' time, like the hero of a story. I wasn't that big a fool. I knew it would take a good five years, and maybe more, to make a head sawyer. Besides, I was somewhat scared of the idea, the way it had struck me so suddenly and stirred me up; and experience or something else in me cautioned me to go slowly and carefully with the idea and think it over for a long time, and let the future decide on how and where to work it out, if at all. I was beginning to realize that a man usually has quite a long lifetime to go, and that he never needs to be in such a rush, but it is better to think things along.

Sawmill work had never appealed to me before; and common-labor jobs around the mills, handling lumber especially, were mostly good for nobody but black foreigners. The sawyer's job was the heart of my idea, and I knew that working up to it would be a long, hard road.

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I had no mind to tackle it now. I'd just keep on as I was and see how everything worked out.

Gager was pretty well illuminated when I found him, just as he had been ever since we got into town. He was in a singing humor, and the loggers said he had been roaring out old-time river songs, French Canadian songs, and Argentine songs all morning. Right now he had a banjo, and he was just going it on a song that started like this:

Oh, I've taken my fun where I found it!
I've rogued and I've ranged in my time;
I've had my picking of sweethearts,
And four of the lot was prime.
One was a half-caste widow,
One was a woman of Prome,
One was the wife of a jammer, bar size,
And one was a girl from home.

I never could make any sense out of the next to last line in the first verse, but otherwise it was a fine song all through. It seemed to have been made up by a soldier who had served his time in the Philippines, or some place like that; but Gager claimed it had only been a poem until he got hold of it, and he had set it to music. Well, the music was all right, but it was the words which hit me. The soldier had been tormented by women until he was mighty sad about them; he had learned all about women, but it hadn't done him any good. It was easy for me to understand his poem and to sympathize with him.

After Gager had finished his song, I got him to come to dinner, and then we loafed around until it was time for the logging train to pull out. We were going back to the camp this afternoon and rest up from the Fourth and wash our clothes the next day. We had a few beers after dinner and Gager took a quart of Old Taylor along when we rambled for the train.

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We slept most of the way out. And the others did, too. Only the sober loggers were allowed to ride on the train. It was a quiet trip.

And it was a quiet supper in camp, for only about half the crew had returned.

And we were still quiet when we gathered around the smudge fire after supper. We all had that blue, let-down feeling that comes after a celebration.

Then Lassen blazed up in one of its greatest eruptions of the year.

There was no moon. It looked just like a great, dull, red cloud away off in the darkness.

It gave a man a sort of uncanny feeling to see such a mighty glare; being such a sullen, smoky red made it appear like something angry and terrible was threatening. You could imagine that the earth might start shaking all around you any minute and the pine trees blaze up suddenly in fire.

We watched and said hardly a word as the smoky blaze spread out like a red, plumy fan being slowly opened in the black sky.

I jumped nervously as a deep laugh roared out of the shadows close to the fire. Then I hear Gager's voice:

"Lassen smokes! Lassen blazes! Look on Lassen, you bullies, and listen. I got a story to tell."

Gager crowded to the front of the circle and passed the bottle of Old Taylor around.

"Save me a drink till I'm done with my fable," said Gager. "Drink all, and then hark ye! hark ye! to a tale such as you've never heard before and won't hear again. Ever since I first saw Lassen I've been haunted by a picture of the primorjal scene. It was dim at first, just the smoke and fire of volcanoes everywhere; but to-night I saw the picture plain. I saw the primorjal menagerie; I saw the vaccus leaping over the mountains which were caves of fire; and I saw her pursued by the

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minktum on his love prowl. Hark ye! hark ye! to the story of the vaccus and the minktum."

Here is Gager's story. Not just as he told it then, but as he wrote it down the next day, saying he had to get it off his mind. He used to write stuff quite a bit, and then swear at it and burn it up. But I liked this story and made him let me keep it.

The bottle got to me before Gager began. I set it between my legs, slouched back against a log and waited. Gager stared at the smoky red fan of fire over Lassen. The light of the smudge fire made his black eyes shine very bright. He chuckled three or four times, then his right hand swept out, and we were quiet. The fire crackled. Lassen smoked and blazed.

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XXIV

THE LOVE STORY MY FRIEND, LEN GAGER, TOLD ONE NIGHT IN A BIG-WHEEL LOGGING CAMP NEAR LASSEN, THE VOLCANO.—*Jim Turner.*

TIMES and times ago these mountain lands were known as the Volcano Country. The dismal, silent hollows of the peaks hereabouts were all roaring craters then. All days the sun shone red through black clouds over the land, and all nights the moon was dimmed by smoky blazes. And the only notable creatures that lived in the Volcano Country were the lava bears, which had cast-iron feet and asbestos hides; the lightning birds, which had lamps in their tails, and left blue streaks wherever they flew; and the virtuous spring-tailed vaccuses which ruled the country. Besides these notables, there were firefish in the hissing streams, fireflies in the smoky air, glowworms in the ashy earth, and other hot and juicy small creatures whose names have not come down to us. Banks of fireweed grew along the scalding creeks which flowed under plumes of steam through the red pepper pastures where the lava bears roved. The Volcano Country, my lads, was a warm, warm land.

It was scorned and despised by the creatures of all other countries. Even the lean-bellied sand gougers, the six-winged toola hens and the green-eyed, rough-necked thousand-footed dollarpedes of the Great Southern Desert ridiculed, in their conclaves, the lava bears and the lightning birds, and had few notions of respect for the spring-tailed vaccuses. Eastward the badgerbeasts in their prairie caves had many chuckling dreams about the humorous creatures of the Volcano Country. And on in the great forest lands the mighty woofer bears shook oak trees to the earth when they thought about that strange country and laughed. And the elks, the

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moose, the eagles, the gaudy sireners, the gruff oddbellers, the snorting rotor ryans, and the lesser species of the vast forest population often held clown parades among the trees in ridicule of the poor Volcano Country creatures. And down in the Southeast the waumpus cats and the yam wolves would yowl and howl at night in the face of the yellow moon, their green eyes and their red eyes glowing with scorn among the snowy blooms of the cotton trees, their noses lifted sneeringly as they thought of the Volcano Country beasts and birds. Even on the West Coast the totemcods, the blond wolves and the tigermunks scoffed at their neighbors over the mountains, in the times when they were not skittering about in search of treehoppers, sage gulls, and salmon berries.

In the cool green forest lands above the Border, where the mightiest beasts of all kept the country to themselves, the Volcano Country was seldom thought about. The kingly creatures who kept a solitary tribe there, the magnificent minktums of golden fur, silvery steel claws and velvet feet, had too much pride and dignity to clown it in ridicule of less fortunate creatures. Not even in secret; never a one of them would stoop to chuckle, scoff or snort at the vaccus-ruled land when he was in the privacy of his comfortable cave.

Each minktum had a cave of his own. Each magnificent minktum was masculine. A golden-coated he-beast from nose whisker to tail tuft. The eyes of a minktum were blazes of black in the sunlight. At night they glittered with red sparks. The muscles of his chest, swelling out under a noble neck, rippled inside a thick coat of downy fur which was pale yellow. From his chest and belly the pale yellow hue ran in narrowing stripes halfway up his side, and then his fur was such a rich shining gold that it seemed to have stored summers of sunlight. The minktum's long ears were wonderful as well as beautiful. They were gifted with a sinuous

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muscularity. The minktum could flatten them over his eyes or he could curl them into the tiniest of knots. He could stick them out so stiffly in front of him that they would become two deadly sharp horns, the hairs on their tips like steel needles. But usually these pink hairs were soft and silky, like the minktum's curly whiskers, which waved about his bright purple nose, and through which his teeth shone snowily when he smiled.

Every seven years the minktum tribe went South on its love prowl. There were no female minktums; so in the mating season the females of various suitable species were pursued. This pursuit was usually only a matter of form, for the attentions of a minktum were considered a very great honor among all the Southern animals. The mating season over, the magnificent male minktums would all return in dignity to their own country; and there were always lamentations in the desert, the prairie and the forests over their departure. When the offspring was born, whether the mother was a totemcod, a dollarpede, a badgerbeast, a woofer bear, a rotor ryan, or a yam wolf, it was always marvelously masculine. As soon as it was weaned, the minktum instinct would lead it away to the North, where it would join the paternal tribe. By the time the next mating season occurred he would be grown into a magnificent he-beast, and he would join in gloriously on the love prowl.

The minktums grew so much alike, as a rule, that one could hardly be told from another. But some grew a trifle lordlier than their fellows, of course; and now and then one excelled royally; so the tribe kept a kingship. Each spring a contest was held for this honor; the minktum who leaped the highest into a great pine tree was made the ruler for the year. When his triumphant leap was done, the victor had to lie in wait on a river bank and catch a black whale trout, for this was the symbol of kingship. The honor and power had been

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held for years now by a noble but tyrannical minktum.

And sometimes a runty infant would come up from below the Border. Such a one would be tolerated until the mating season came on; then he would be forced to go seek his mate in the Volcano Country, where he was certain to perish from fire, hunger and unrequited love. Only one runt ever returned in triumph. It is his story I tell.

At the time of his first mating season he had reached hardly two-thirds of the usual size. But, in spite of that, a true minktum heart beat under his golden coat. He did not go dejectedly into the Volcano Country, as the runts usually did; instead, when he leaped over the Border and plunged on at a smoking gallop towards the clouded lands, his black eyes glittered with heroic hope, his ears stiffened out before his eyes like two gilded spears, and his tail—like the tails of all minktums on the love prowl, it was lifted and spread in peacock fashion—was a shimmering gold fan in the sunlight.

Soon the sun began to redden; there were black streamers of smoke overhead. The gallant little minktum galloped on, and the love call sounded from deep in his throat.

A virgin spring-tailed vaccus perched on the edge of a lava bluff, from where she was watching the firefish in the hot white water below and the lightning birds making blue, zigzag streaks against the black clouds above, hear the love call. Her long, sinuous, coal-black body shook as though from laughter, she lifted her black nose, and winked a saucy red eye at the dim circle of the sun. Then she raised her feet and inspected the innumerable cups in their bottoms; and she then seized the last big spiral of her spring tail in her teeth, stretched it to see that its springiness was still good, unloosed it, rested her chin on her paws again, and waited.

The love call sounded nearer and nearer. The vaccus

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seemed to sleep, but she kept watch from the back corner of her left eye. She saw the minktum come leaping around the slope of a far volcano. He rushed on towards her through the red-pepper pastures. He paused as he came to a steaming creek. He put his paw in the water, but jerked it out and howled at the heat. Then he caught the scent of the vaccus. He curled his nose; he sounded the love call at its noblest; then he dived bravely into the hot little stream which had turned back nearly every other minktum in the vaccus' experience.

She quietly awaited the minktum's approach. As he neared her she sat up on her tail and looked at him inquiringly. "What do you want? I do not quite understand you," her innocent, trouble gaze seemed to say. The minktum stopped, rolled his eyes bashfully, tied his ears into a love knot, and sounded the love call softly but throbbingly. The vaccus looked away and sniffed; then she yawned and gazed sleepily across the deep and narrow chasm. The minktum slowly crept up. His black eyes had a tender glow. His voice was singing.

Now he was close enough to the vaccus to tentatively reach out a velvet paw. But it never touched her. Vigorously she sat on her spring tail, and in the wink of an eye she was a black flash soaring across the canyon. The minktum howled in horror when he saw that she was falling short of the opposite wall. She struck the side with all four feet, and the minktum gasped with astonishment to see her holding fast to the smooth rock. The vacuum cups on her feet made her as much at home there as she would be on the earth of a level plain. The vaccus walked up the side of the perpendicular wall. When she reached the top she turned and stared over space at the minktum. Then she laughed the vaccus laugh. "H-r-r-r-r-ack-aha! H-r-r-r-r-ack-aha!" her voice rang out.

Despite the scorn in the laughter, it did not sound un-

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pleasantly to the minktum. He lay down on his side of the canyon and rested. Until nightfall the two lay and watched each other, the vaccus laughing very often, the minktum silent in thought. He was recalling all the guile and cunning of his tribe. He could do this, for though he was runty in body, his mind was as good as any minktum's.

"Never mind, my girl," he was saying, in his own way. "Never mind. I'll get you yet."

He might have been discouraged if he had known what effort was ahead of him. It was no wonder that all the other runty minktums had given up and perished. It is all very well to be a member of the noblest tribe of beasts, and to have their cunning and guile; it is all very well to go forth on the love prowl with true minktum joy and courage; but even the mightiest, strongest and nimblest minktum would be baffled by such a creature as the vaccus, in such a place as the Volcano Country. What hope is there for such a poor one as myself? So other undergrown minktums had thought, and despaired. But this one was more courageous and wise.

Being so, he did not lose his head and go floundering about in vain pursuit of the vaccus at once. He set out to find a living for himself in the country. For days he prowled and lurked over the ashy plains, along the hot rivers and creeks, and he dodged rolling rocks and torrents of lava on the slopes of the volcanoes, searching for a food supply. He did not sit on his haunches and stare hungrily at the coveys of lightning birds under the black clouds. Instead, he learned their nesting places and found sustenance in their hard, hot eggs. He learned to snap fireflies out of the air at night, and he dug among the glowworm burrows for food also. He waited patiently in the red-pepper pastures to ambush lava bears, but they were so tough and unsavory as food that his digestion was imperiled. The minktum did not

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wax fat until he discovered the deliciousness and nutritiousness of firefish. Then he held himself for hours in the hot waters of the streams; and ere long he was seasoned to the heat and could angle for firefish whenever he was pleased to do so. They were often hot as blazes when he dragged them out, but when they had cooled a bit they were far more juicy and sweet than the cold fish of the Northland streams.

Now the minktum was prepared to take up his pursuit of the vaccus. And for months there was not a day or a night that the minktum's love call did not sound in her ears. At first she laughed at him as before and leaped across canyons from his touch. But he would no longer lie and watch her longingly. He knew the country now and was at home in the hottest rivers. Down he would dive into a stream, then under her on a rock he would sit, while she clung to the wall and looked down at him, with perturbation in her rose-red eyes. Never no more could she come down to the waters of the streams and snap out firefish. Whenever she would attempt to descend, there would be the minktum, waiting for her, sounding his low love call. When she departed for the volcanoes to look for lightning birds' eggs, the minktum would come bounding behind her, and she would be compelled to use her spring tail to keep ahead of him, and to use the vacuum cups on her feet to crawl up cliffs and escape his leaps. With all this use, they became worn and were far less dependable than they once had been.

The vaccus began to worry after six months of this pursuit had gone by and the minktum's persistence became fervent as well as cunning. No longer did she laugh: "H-r-r-r-r-ack-aha! H-r-r-r-r-ack-aha!" at the minktum. She began to respect him, and even admired him a little.

And the minktum had become respectable and admirable in every way. The effort of the long pursuit

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had made his muscles swell and grow. The firefish agreed with him wonderfully, and his coat grew more handsomely golden week by week. At last he was as fine a creature as any minktum that ever was; and when a year had gone by and a spring sun again shone vainly to brighten the land he was such a minktum as had never trod through the forests of the Northland. He had been tried by fire, and his soul had been sharpened on the stone of a hard purpose and proved true steel. The weakening vaccus looked on the magnificent minktum with a troubled gaze; and she mourned over her spring tail and her vacuum-cupped feet; and she was frightened to see in their increasing weakness, as in a mirror, the shadow of inevitable surrender.

But she was a stubborn vaccus and resolved on one last desperate attempt to shake the minktum from her tracks. On a smoky spring day of blazing heat she set out at a steady run, the minktum sounding his throbbing love call behind her. Fear loaned her its eternal wings and she fairly flew up the length of a wide valley and turned in among a vast cluster of volcanoes. The minktum followed like a golden shadow. Around one volcano she loped, and she heard the rocks rattling under the minktum's feet as he suddenly shortened the distance between them. A stream of molten lava rolled fiercely ahead of her. The vaccus felt the breath of the minktum on her neck. Desperately she sat on her spring tail and soared over the lava stream, barely clearing it. And plunged on. She stopped a moment to rest. She saw the minktum leaping up the side of the volcano, his golden coat showing dingily through the smoke. He reached a narrow place in the fiery stream and leaped across. Once more the pursuit was on.

The vaccus rushed down the side of the volcanic mountain. On the brink of a boiling stream she halted, sat forcefully on her tail and sprang to the sheer wall

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of a cliff. She ascended slowly, for the vacuum cups on her feet were far from trustworthy now, and she needed to use great care in walking up the wall. The running minktum disappeared in a gully above. And just as she labored over the edge of the wall she saw the minktum galloping across the plateau towards her. Wearily the vaccus sprang away. She reached a narrow gully. On her tail she sat, and soared across. The minktum leaped up the head of the gully, crossed it, and circled down after her again.

He waved his ears like banners, in his hope of approaching victory. His black eyes shone with fervor in the ashy smoke. Already there was a ring of triumph in his love call. But the vaccus would not yet abandon hope.

All day she led the love race among the volcanoes. But, despite her spring tail and her vacuum cups, which she was forced to use constantly, the vaccus could not shake off the tireless minktum. Did she leap a canyon and race around the slope of a volcano, she met the minktum, who had cunningly headed her off by galloping the other way around. Through and around the whole vast cluster of volcanoes the chase kept up, and at sundown the vaccus emerged into the valley again. Wearily and pantingly she sprang into the valley plain, using her spring tail more and more to elude the persistent and unwearied minktum. At last she came to the canyon of the hot river, where first she had met him, and one last despairing spring sent her to the rock wall beyond the stream. Almost exhausted, she clung tremblingly to the smooth rock.

The canyon was darkening fast. The sun was only a smoky red spot in a bed of black clouds. In the mountains the fires of the craters began to flow dimly. Soon the thick darkness of the Volcano Country night would descend.

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The vaccus, with a painful effort, raised one foot to ascend the wall. But she thrust it back at once, for she had slipped when her weight was held by only three feet. The vacuum cups had been tried beyond their strength this day. The vaccus shivered. Then she felt a dull ache in her spring tail. She looked down at it from the back corner of her left eye as she waggled it feebly. It was beginning to swell. Certainly it was terribly strained. The ache in it became more painful. Two great tears rolled from the eyes of the vaccus and dropped down the canyon wall.

They fell on the upturned face of the minktum. He sounded his love call pleadingly as he tenderly wiped them away. Then four more large tears fell upon him and he let them remain. He lay on a little beach before a big dark cave in the canyon wall. In front of his paws was a heap of delicate young firefish. The steam of them wafted up to the vaccus and gave her a faintness of hunger. She was very weary. Her feet were sore and weak. Her spring tail ached more painfully every minute. Another such day would ruin her. The vaccus began to slide slowly down the canyon wall. It was surrender.

For half an hour she feasted on firefish, while the magnificent minktum fanned her with his golden tail and purred lovingly. When she was through eating the vaccus looked up at him meekly. The minktum gently smiled. And then such a tenderness softened her gaze that her eyes glowed with a rose-pink light. The minktum motioned with his head towards the black mouth of the cave. And then the twain disappeared in its darkness.

The others of the minktum tribe had returned from their love prowl among the totemcods, the dollarpedes, the badgerbeasts, the woofer bears and the wampus cats long before. They had forgotten long before the runty

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minktum they had sent out to perish in a hopeless love prowl among the volcanoes. Now they were engaged in the springtime contest which was to decide the ruler for the year.

The pine for the contest stood on the bank of a deep river. One by one, the minktums had leaped up among its branches, and now the contest was nearly over. The last one, the tyrannical, lordly minktum who had ruled for so long, ran and leaped now, and made the great tree shiver as he caught a place far above the one reached by his nearest rival. He clawed his mark proudly and the minktums below growled small applause. They did not like this lordly minktum with the tyrannical heart.

The victor started a roar of triumph. But it was never finished. A great golden shape came bounding out of the green trees of the hills; it flashed into a glittering streak as it approached through the sunlight; then this glittering golden shape soared high over the assembled minktums and crashed into the branches above the lordly one's head with such violence that he was shaken to the ground, where he lay groaning.

Now the golden shape dived out of the tree and dropped headlong into the river. Two minutes passed, while the minktums waited in mute astonishment. Then the head of the minktum who had been driven into the Volcano Country was thrust above the water, and in his mouth a huge black whale trout struggled helplessly. The minktum marched drippingly out of the river, dropped the whale trout at his feet, and looked kindly down on his fellows. He was grander now than any of them. They saw the kindness in his eyes and they roared with delight as he picked up the black whale trout and strode with dignity to the royal cave.

All his years this minktum kept the rulership of the tribe. For he always went into the Volcano Country on his love prowl and renewed his strength and endurance

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in pursuit of the vaccus. And the vaccus of the Volcano Country became envied by all other animals and was laughed and clowned about no more. For she was vastly celebrated as the favorite of the mighty ruler of the minktums; and in that time, also, rulers and their favorites were never laughable.

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XXV

JULY rolled away. We soon got over the celebration and settled into logging again. One day a forest fire started, and it kept us on the go for a solid thirty-six hours and left us completely worn out. There were a couple of fights in the last two weeks and another wheel teamster was smashed up. That was all the excitement of the month.

About the last of July I had a letter from Indiana Beaut which read as follows:

Mr. Jim Turner,
Galeburg, Cal.
DEAR SIR:

Well, old-timer, I was glad to hear from you. Are you still up there in the woods? I hope everything is finer than froghair with you. I and Meta have been married for two weeks. I tell you it's the only life. You better come down and get you a wife, too. There is a dandy little bungalow right next to us which you can get for ten dollars down and ten dollars a month. Total price, $650. I have been finishing for over six months now. I make my four dollars regular every day. You ought to come down and learn to handle a motor truck. Lots of the teamsters is going into it. Mr. Plunk is changing to motor trucks as fast as he can. He has a factory for making them and tractors, too. He has put up the biggest building in town, with William R. Plunk in letters ninety-one feet high on top of it. You wouldn't know Loss the way it grows. They are even using motor trucks for sprinkling the streets now. Meta and I are going to buy a Ford together with Carrie and Jake. You had better come down and get settled. I ain't seen Tiva since before you left. I saw Annie Doane the other day on the street. She is married to Pete Staffer and was with that old friend she brought to you out at the beach. Your friend was carrying a baby, so I guess you lost out there, old-timer. Ha! Ha! That's something Meta and

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I are thinking a lot about, too. You watch us. Well, that's all I can think of now. Meta says to ask if you still have your appetite. She says she'll cook you something nice when you come down. Well, be good, old-timer. Don't take any wooden nickels. Everybody sends regards.

Yours truly,
HENRY J. BANNER.

That letter gave me a kind of homesick feeling for a spell; but I knew this was foolish and I argued myself out of it. The old town didn't mean anything in my life any more, and neither did the girls down there. I liked to remember Beaut, for he was a fine man. And I'd had some good days when I was teaming for William R. Plunk, riding high and feeling cocky and proud, not knowing I was bound to fall. And I'd never forget the pleasant evenings out at Carrie's, or some of the shows I had seen, or the Sundays at the beach, or the moonlight walks with Tiva under the pepper trees of Sonora Town. But that was all shoved behind me, long ago and far away, as it said in another song that Gager used to sing. I was born for the timber country and I knew it now. I had to settle down and work my life out here, with the idea of a head sawyer's job to lead me upward and on. The friends, the girls, the times and the towns of other days were just to remember. To remember in the firelight, as I grew old. This, and no more. I did feel old and serious now; it was a pretty melancholy feeling, but not tormenting, anyway.

In the month of August my melancholy ruminations were ended with a jolt. We had enough excitement in camp then to make almost anyone forget his personal problems and worries. The excitement started when the news of the World War was brought to us in the Frisco papers, which got to the camp when they were two days old. I had thought all along that it was mostly American loggers in this camp; but when the

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news of the war broke in on us, I discovered that among the German loggers, the Irish loggers, the French loggers, the Austrian loggers, the Scotch loggers, the Canadian loggers and the Italian loggers, the American loggers made a small, peaceful number.

It's in such events that you discover what hopeless damn fools most workingmen are and how idiotic all the different brands of making-the-world-do-better talk really are, too. It appeared that Gager, the Little Bull and me were about the only three men in camp who would agree that all the people on the other side of the Atlantic were making the biggest mule-headed fools out of themselves the world had ever seen. Even the Swedes took part, on the Germans' side. Of course that was to be expected of them. A Swede is the hardest man alive to get into a fight, but he loves to argue so well that he can't keep out of an argument to save his soul. The few of us who still claimed to be Americans just made fun of both sides of the argument; and Gager got to telling Paul Bunyan stories around the smudge fire, in ridicule of all the fighters over in Europe; but these loggers who had turned foreigners suddenly took their arguments so much to heart that I had to fight them off Gager with my fists half a dozen times.

Well, the war was an infernal nuisance in the life of the camp from the first, and it got worse. By the first of September Gager himself had stopped making fun of the war, and every night he would read the papers very solemnly. Lassen had been quiet for some time now, and he orated about the volcano no more. He even stopped telling Paul Bunyan stories and spent most of his spare time in reading and in lying on his blankets and frowning up at the roof of the tent. I asked him once or twice what he was reading in the newspapers which made him think so much, but he simply wouldn't talk any more. I never read anything but the headlines

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myself. I liked to look them over before I went down to the cookhouse for supper, and then yell at a German logger: "The paper says they's ten thousand more Dutchmen croaked. If that keeps up, Germany'll be a fit place to live in yet!" And I'd yell the same thing at a French logger about France, or at a Scotch logger about England. I was always impartial. All the fighters looked like fools to me.

One evening after supper Gager read one piece over and over and thought very solemnly about it. He went out to the commissary, and while he was gone I took a look at the piece he was reading. It told about Americans going North over the border to enlist with Canadian troops.

"So this is what's been eatin' you," I said to Gager when he came back. And I shoved the paper under his nose, with my finger pointing out that particular piece.

"Yes, lad," said Gager, in a deep voice, his black eyes shining. He waved his hand grandly. "I'm leaving in the morning. I just told the Little Bull."

"For Canada?"

"Yea, lad. For Canada. It will be very glorious. Europe smokes!"

"Well, for the saints' sake! You damn fool, you!"

"Into fierceness and blood and death, Appanoose Jim!"

"Gager," I said very seriously. "Gager, you must have gone crazy."

"Millions marching. Millions marching. The drums beat, the trumpets ring, the cannon roar!"

"Looky here, Gager. Who in his right mind would deliberately go over and stick hisself into the middle of a mess like that? They've all gone crazy over there. They're all actin' like a pack of frothin' fools. Why, time after time you've been pokin' fun at 'em yourself.

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And now you say you're goin' right into it. Holy mackinaw!"

"The fierceness and blood and death of war!" said Gager, in his grandest voice. "Lassen pales. Europe smokes. Life will perish by fire, for fire is eternal. There is fire in the cold moon, in the far stars. And fire in the hands and hearts of mortal millions marching. The gift of Prometheus, the first salvation-bringer, the first uplifter, is fierceness and blood and death. Europe smokes! Yet there are bright banners and music and wine. A tramp of feet, and bayonets shining. I go forth to adventure."

I had got less and less in the humor to hear Gager's orations after that Fourth of July in Galeburg and I didn't have the patience to listen to him now, though his deep, rich voice rolled the words out in fine style. I rambled out of the tent and joined the gang around the smudge fire. All the foreign loggers were arguing their heads off about the war, and I soon got sick of listening to them. I got up and took a hike through the timber. When I came to the top of a hill from where I could see old Shasta, white and peaceful in the moonlight, I sat down to cool off in the autumn night breeze and I looked for a long time on the grand, white, quiet mountain.

"Why can't people be like you, old-timer?" I said. "But then I guess you used to bust loose, just like Lassen; and some time or other you'll probably bust loose again. Everything and everybody in the world seems to have to get tormented and stirred up, and then bust loose without any reason at all."

I sat there and smoked on my pipe and thought about as seriously as I ever had yet. I seemed to have got hold of something I could chew on. There was Lassen, as quiet as Shasta for years; then, suddenly—blooey!—Lassen went. And as for me, why, that was the way

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life had gone all along; I'd get into a spell of quiet and peace, but it never did last. And it was very likely one never would. That was all there was to it. I knew it now. It was the same way with Gager, too. But he was certainly far above me, I decided. It took only something like a woman or a head sawyer's job to get me going. But it took a volcano or a war to really rouse him.

Well, Gager was beyond me. I could understand how he felt about big jobs of work; but I had never quite got hold of his idea about Lassen; and his idea about the war was absolutely out of my reach. But Gager was wonderful company, and I hated to think of us splitting up.

It was pretty late when I went back to our tent. I had made up my mind to humble myself to Gager and tell him I realized he was too much for me, but that I hoped we could always remember each other as friends, anyhow. But I didn't get a chance to say a word. He had got a quart from somewhere, and he was pretty well illuminated when I came in. I saw him lying on the blankets, holding the bottle in one hand and waving his pipe with the other, while he sang a lively marching song in French words. He started orating before I was well inside the tent.

"Listen to me, Appanoose Jim! Listen to me, you who might have been the equal of the great dark devil in a better day!" He swung his feet down from the cot, sat up and stared at me through his eyelashes, his chin tucked down, his hand stretched out and waving the stem of his pipe. The lamplight shining down from above the table against the tent wall made his forehead look very white, and the waves of hair down over it were very dark. "You plain laborer, you! But never mind. It's not your fault that you are only his golden shadow now, even as the work we know in the West is

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only a pale shadow of the great jobs that once called to adventurous workingmen. Men like the great dark devil and me tamed the West and made it safe and comfortable for the plain laborer. He is everywhere in the West now. It is his day. His day always comes. He has moved eternally. Always the same. Slowly, slowly he moves along the new trails hewn out by adventurers. And always he drives the adventurers out. It has been the same story on land and sea. We can only hope for war. Fierceness and blood and death! Oh, Appanoose Jim, those words would have made the great dark devil leap and roar!"

"Maybe they would," I said. "But you're not talkin' to me, Gager."

"No," said Gager, with a sigh. "It is true, then. I've hoped—but I'm so damn romantic. Who are you, now, Jim Turner? March, memories, for a while."

He clasped his hands around his right knee, rocked back and stared for a minute at the canvas wall above the lamp. He smiled, then he unloosed his knee, slapped his leg and chuckled.

"I have you, Jim Turner. You are Andy's brother, as I live. I was pondering the library books, in which the old-time adventurers appear as the honored followers of generals, kings and heroes. Always I can see the plain laborer toiling away behind them, occupied only with his own little life. In whatever age I may find him, I can hear him speak, for I know his mind. He is the same forever. Andy's brother, a horse-currier of Rome, has a story to tell. Will you hear it, Jim Turner?"

"Go ahead, Gager," I said.

I wanted to be agreeable and I was curious to know what he was getting at. I didn't like for him to start calling me by my real name all of a sudden and to intimate that I was one of the plain laborers he sneered

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about; but I knew that in his heart Gager meant no harm and just wanted to orate and talk; and, the way he was chuckling, his story was likely to be a funny one.

"Go ahead, old-timer," I said, in my friendliest way. "Let's have a drink apiece out that bottle and get our pipes to foggin' up, and then let me have it about this horse-currier of yours. I bet he's a character."

"Good boy," said Gager. "Your heart is right."

When he said that, it made me feel fine to think I'd been so good-natured with him. We had our drinks, we lit our pipes, and the blue smoke curled up to the white canvas roof; Gager cleared his throat a couple of times and started in yarning. He talked in such a natural, everyday way that it was several minutes before I could get it into my head that this brother of Andy's was telling of a time long before Columbus, of a time in Rome, when the Christian people were just getting their start. But when I got the hang of the idea, the story tickled me most all the way through.

"I don't claim to be no more than an everyday plain pagan, but I have a fine job at the Coliseum curryin' chariot horses, and I allow I'm just as good as the next slave that comes along." (Gager, you see, was pretending that he was Andy's brother himself, telling his own story. I caught this right away.) "I figger I'm jest as broad-minded as the next man, too, and I ain't one to declare that *all* that these here radicals say is right is wrong, or *all* that they say is wrong is right. I don't bother my head figgerin' much one way or t'other. I get along right well, and it seems to me that every other honest workin' slave does the same. Way I figger is, if I get along all right, me bein' about the same as anybody else, what kick have I got, anyhow? And as fer these idees which these Chrischuns is talkin' about, why, they're all right fer folks that likes idees to bother

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about; but I don't like idees and I don't want to mess with 'em.

"My brother, Andy, now, is differ'nt. He's been fussin' with first this idee and then that idee ever since he was a little tike. Pa and ma used to think he was the brightest one in the fambly and that he'd amount to right smart some day. Trouble was he'd never stick to one idee long enough to get any real practical good out of it. At last he got this Chrischun idee, and it happened to be jest the one idee of all of 'em that would be shore to torment him and torment him and make life miser'ble fer him everywhere.

"Andy was the kind of feller who gets wrought up doggone easy and is always wantin' to fight and make trouble about something that nobuddy else much gives a dern about. He was always more or less cranky about religious matters and wasn't satisfied to leave these things in the hands of the folks the gods had app'inted. I don't think any of us ever got more pleasure out of our religion than we did in the Bacchic festivals; but it made Andy sore every time one came around. Everybody would be havin' a nice excitin' time, revelin' away, and Andy'd stand off to one side and talk about how sech carryin's on couldn't be right and decent. He never got downright blasphemous until he become a Chrischun, but he was always pesterin' other folks and tormentin' hisself about things that didn't make a speck of differ'nce one way or t'other.

"But he kep' gettin' worse and worse and fin'ly jined with the Chrischuns, that new bunch of radicals which is stirrin' things up everywhere. And he'd 'a' gone to a bad end with 'em, if it hadn't been that bullheaded luck jest saved him. You know how they been makin' lion-fodder out of the most radical of these Chrischuns the past year or two. Well, Andy was due and all

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set to be et once. But he wasn't. And here's why.

"One time not so long back Andy got an idee he could be about the best musician they ever was if he'd only put his mind to it. So he got him a lyre; and, shore 'nuf, he practiced and practiced night and day until he could make that thing talk. Folks came from miles around to hear him play the latest tunes. But the way Andy was, this didn't satisfy him ay-tall. He got the idee it wasn't nothin' much to play so's to please plain folks; he wanted to do something real big with his music. So what does he do but go out and buy a young lion and set to work to make the lion do tricks to his music? Said that if Orph'us could do it, why, so could Andy. Well, the lion jest roared around when Andy played, and, Andy always bein' so easy to get wrought up, he would almost froth at the mouth because the lion wouldn't perform like he wanted. One day he jest nacherly took a club to the lion and whaled the livin' daylights out of him. Maybe the lion was a kind of pore-spirited critter, and maybe it was jest that Andy was about the toughest fighter ever heard of; anyways, he put the fear of the gods into that lion and give him a mighty lickin'.

"Time went on. Every day Andy would play to the lion; the lion would jest look stupid, or maybe roar a little; then Andy would get wrought up and give him a fearful whalin'. Fin'ly the lion got so's he would flop over and stick his paws in the air to show he was licked as soon as Andy would pick one note from the lyre. And Andy would come away satisfied. By and by the lion would kinda fergit, and Andy'd whale him again. Every time he'd yell before he started in: 'You lay down, dod-dern you, or I'll knock you down!' It got so's that always fetched the lion, even when he'd fergot the music, and Andy hardly ever had to hit him a lick any more.

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"Well, he soon got tired of this idee, after the lion begin to give in so easy; and then was when he took up with the idee of bein' a Chrischun. He sold his lion out to the circus at Rome and went after his new idee full force. B'fore long, of course, he was caged up and waitin' to be throwed to the lions some Sunday.

"While he was waitin' he was faunchin' around like he always was, lookin' fer something to get wrought up over; and what does he do but work up a big argyment with the boss lion-handler? Andy told him they was no sense and no art in the way they fed Chrischuns to the lions; and that if *he* had the lion-handler's job *he'd* train the beasts so's they'd put up a real show fer the folks and give the Chrischuns a half-decent shake to come out alive, also.

"The big lion-handler jest laughed at Andy and kidded him along; and the more he did this, the madder Andy got. He was yellin' at the lion-handler all the time.

" 'I think yer plain nuts,' the lion-handler told Andy one day. 'But if you'll promise to shet yer face and keep it shet from now on, why, I'll git you a lyre and see how you make out in savin' yerself and yer feller-Chrischuns next Sunday.'

"Andy said he didn't ask fer anything better. He got his lyre and he spent the rest of the week practicin'.

"Well, Sunday come, and they was a monster crowd on hand to see the show. They had some good races and combats and fist-fights, and the crowd was put into a mighty good humor fer the big act of the afternoon.

" 'Come on with the Chrischuns!' they was yellin'. 'Make 'em speed up out there! Show a little life, you lion-handlers! Come on, come on; we gotta git home in time fer supper!'

"Jest when everybody was worked up to the most impatience they could stand, the Chrischuns came paradin'

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out, with Andy in the lead. The crowd let out a big yell, like it always did; and then this yell turned into one big windy sigh of surprise when they saw that Andy was carryin' a lyre. Then everybody took it as a joke and begin to kid the Chrischuns unmercifully. But Andy didn't pay no mind; he walked along as proud and confident as could be, holdin' up the lyre so's its gold frame and silver strings sparkled in the sunlight; his big shoulders, white as marble, a-shinin' and a-swayin' as he tramped along.

"The first lion was turned out and come prancin' and leapin' t'ords the Chrischuns. It shore looked hungry fer raw meat. Andy stood stock-still and begin to play the lyre. Everybody thought the Chrischuns was jest makin' one of their songs, and some of the crowd begin to cheer at Andy playin' away so brave, and the lion leapin' straight at him. Well, I knowed it was the whalin's that had tamed that other lion, and I knowed in my soul that no lion would mind any music. So I shet my eyes from the hor'ble sight.

"Then I heard the crowd yell with surprise. I opened my eyes and looked. The lion had stopped; and he stood still, wavin' his tail. Everybody got quiet, seemin' to hold their breath. Andy played on. Then I heard him yell:

" 'You lay down, dod-dern you, or I'll knock you down!'

"And with that he busted the lyre all to pieces over the lion's head. And that lion—would you believe it? —*did* lay down; and he stayed there, with his paws wavin' in the air! And then it came over me in a flash that through pure, bullheaded luck this was *the very same lion that Andy had whaled the life out of fer nigh on a year!*

"Fer a minute I was plum' flabbergasted; then I jined in the wild yells of the mob and stuck my thumb up with

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the rest of them. And the long and the short of it was that Andy and the others got a full pardon from Cæsar and was allowed to be Chrischuns as long as they liked. But Andy soon got tired of his Chrischun idee and went out adventurin' to the wilds of Gaul, as big a fool as ever.

"The funny part was that a wild fairy tale got started around about how Andy had done his Chrischun duty by pickin' a thorn from a lion's paw out in the timber, and that this was the same lion and had showed true Chrischun gratitude in return. Them Chrischuns is the plague-gondest people to tell crazy stories until they believe 'em theirselves that I ever saw. I'm glad Andy quit 'em and they ain't a lot of 'em pesterin' around the house any more. As fer Andy himself, I never expect him to come to no good end, anyhow. Pore feller, he'd likely as been as well off if the lion had et him. He'll perish out a-rovin' and a-fightin' som'eres. Fer all his idees, he never had much sense. And I doubt now if he ever will have. Pore Andy."

Gager reached for the bottle and took a long drink now.

"Well, Jim Turner," he said, smacking his lips, "what think you of my plain pagan?"

"I liked the story fine," I said. "Go on and tell another."

"Thanks, my son. And now let me ask you this: Would you have stayed at home with the horse-currier, or would you have gone forth adventuring into Gaul with Andy?"

"Looky here, Gager. What are you tryin' to get at, anyhow?"

"Never mind. Never mind." Gager lit his pipe and looked up solemnly through the rising puffs of smoke. When he went on talking, it seemed to be more to himself than to me. "The plain laborer of one of

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the old times. So he was before, so he is now. He followed the adventuring tribes into the plains of the Nile and the Euphrates and to the isles of Greece. He followed the Roman legions into England, France and Spain. He followed the exploring sailors to America. He followed the rivermen, hunters and trappers to the Mississip'. He followed the team hands, hard-rock men, miners and loggers into the Far West. He is in Alaska now. He is in the Andes. He labors around Lassen. And—he is in the war.

"Millions marching. Millions marching. A tramp of feet, and bayonets shining. Banners and music and wine. I'll go forth for adventure. But it's no use. Too many men. Drills and regulations. I don't blame you, Jim Turner. But I'm so damn romantic."

I saw that he was falling into his doldrums and I told him he'd better have another drink and get into bed, and then he'd feel fresher and brighter in the morning. Gager took the drink and went so far as to pull off his shoes; then he sat and stared at me in a moody way as I went on undressing. I rolled into the blankets without saying a word.

"This war, perhaps, is the last adventure," said Gager suddenly.

Then he was silent and moody again. I didn't want to be bothered by his talk while he was in that humor, so I rolled over and pretended to go to sleep. It was quiet for a while, and then I heard Gager blow the light out, and it was dark around. I heard a tramp on the floor, I peered out from the blankets, and I saw Gager standing in the door of the tent. He was leaning against the pole and staring outside.

"Born in a foul day," said Gager, in a low voice to himself. "One last burst of fire, and the old glory fades out forever. There was bravery in the age of superstition; there is comfort in the age of the machine.

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Who but a clown would choose the first? Bravery passes before comfort. The democratic ideal. Comfort—democracy—the philosophy of the machine. This plain laborer, this hewer of wood—what will he be tomorrow? I know. Laborer Number 1,614,791 of Division 845, Class 12; housed in Stall 96, Labor Barn 59; comfortably and complacently doing his simple task strictly according to the provisions of the 397th Amendment to the Constitution of the United Christian States! That will be back to nature—in a cage! Lo, the poor Simian!"

Gager stood quietly for a time, a shadow in the tent door.

"Black falls the shadow of the time to come!"

Gager laughed once, then I saw him wipe his forehead with the back of his hand.

"Oh, the damned books!" He said it with a groan. "Poor Gager. Tormented clown."

Gager looked up then, and said in a milder voice:

"There is a golden swarm of stars over the trees. But the earth is dark. So many stars. So little light."

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XXVI

I woke up in the dark, but I could tell it was morning by the smell of the air. I blinked and yawned and thought in a sleepy way of the dream that had woke me up. The tent flap raised a little as it was caught in a sudden breeze and I saw that the first faint gray shadows of daybreak was coming among the trees. A wave of frosty air blew over my face. I roused up, feeling pretty tough and cranky.

That had been a particularly mean dream. I hardly ever had a dream any more, but when I did, it was usually a bad one. This one had been good at first, but it turned out to be a regular terror. I was in a sawyer's cage and I was making the cants simply fly from a log that was so big it hid the setter and the dogger from my sight. That was wonderful. I could actually feel the power under my right hand as I sent the carriage flying towards the flashing band saw. Then it seemed that the teeth of the saw struck steel; there was a blaze of fire and a roll of smoke; then I saw the carriage empty of all but my setter, and the broken band saw was flying out towards him like a silver ribbon. It coiled around him like a snake, and just as it wound up over his face, I saw that the setter was Gager. It covered him completely, started to tighten around him, and then I woke up. It was about time. I felt like swearing, as I always do after a dream like that.

Well, I didn't seem to want to go back to sleep again; and I lay there and thought for a while about what Gager had talked last night before I went to sleep; and

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that made me feel tougher than ever. I hadn't understood much of what he was getting at, and he hadn't taken the trouble to explain himself, but I knew I'd disappointed him somehow, and that he thought I was lacking in something because I wouldn't get stirred up over the fool war. I couldn't get stirred up, and that was all there was to it. I simply couldn't help it. I'd never imagined Gager could be so unreasonable.

That's the way it goes, I thought bitterly, as I lay there in bed, still cranky from my dream. You meet a man and get to admiring him a lot and looking up to him as a kind of hero; and you keep on doing it for years, glad to hear fine things about him wherever you go, and glad to say fine things about him yourself; and you meet him again and agree to follow him up to work around a volcano, and you'll still admire him and brag on his yarns and oratory; then, just because you won't humor him in a fool idea, he intimates you're a plain pagan, and a lot of that rot. What in the world right did he have to ask me to humor him in his ideas, anyway? Had he ever humored me in mine? No, he hadn't, and he knew it well as I did. Didn't he ditch me when I started for Panama that time? He certainly did. Hadn't he just laughed when I told him about all the women troubles I'd been through? He certainly had. And did he slap me on the back and tell me to go to it when I told him about wanting to be a head sawyer? He certainly did not. And always warning me against tormenting myself with books. As if I ever would! And he knew it as well as anything. That was a fine way to use a pal, the way he treated me. Hellfire! I was just about disgusted with Gager.

I could see that it was getting a lighter gray outside. The dingdong would ring pretty soon, rousing the camp. I decided to get up and go down to the corral before Gager woke up. I didn't want to talk to him while I

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was in this cranky humor. So I rolled out and dressed quietly. Gager was still asleep as I walked softly out. He was lying on his side, his head tucked down on his arm, the long fingers of his hand sort of drooping over his face.

The ground was white with frost and the air was chilly as it zipped over my face in a keen breeze. The pine leaves rustled overhead. Snores sounded from the tents along. There was a banging clatter of tin dishes in the cookhouse, and a rich smell of frying bacon and eggs blew over from there. My blood quickened up and I felt hungry and alive. I took the slope down to the corral at a trot. As I stepped into the barn I heard the ringing of the first gong. The flunky played a regular stirring tune on the triangle.

"Hallo, there," said the barn dog. "Up early. Full of ambition, hey?"

He was in front of the manger, with buckets of oats in his hands. The horses nickered and tramped around as they saw him.

"Yep," was all I said.

"Hear Topper Bill is pullin' out fer Canady and the war." The barn dog was giving my team two gallons of oats. "Thought you might be trailin' along."

I didn't say anything, but went on currying my horses. Barker took a kick at me as I combed his belly, and I swore my loudest. The barn dog went on with his oats.

Barker, my black off devil, was looking for trouble this morning. When I stuck the collar up over his neck he hauled back and bit at my arm. I gave him an open-handed slap along the flank that made him grunt. As I buckled the collar Barker heaved away again and the halter rope pulled apart. I caught its dangling end just as the black horse tried to rear out of the stall, and jerked his head. There was a pole strap within reach, and I caught it up with my free hand and whaled him

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up to the manger. He pranced and snorted and made a leap that jammed me against the boards before I got him tied. We had quite a little tussle and I was in a sweat by the time I had my team harnessed. That made me feel real natural again.

"Yo, there, Jim," said the first teamster who came into the barn. "You ain't pullin' out with yer pardner, then?"

"I'm harnessin' up, anyway," was all I said, and went on out.

"Still stickin', Turner?" said a teamster I met on the slope.

"Who said I was?"

And on the railroad I met a teamster who said:

"If you're goin' over the hump, Jim, I'm askin' the barn dog fer your team."

"Hop to it, Slim."

I stopped and stared after this teamster as he swung on down the slope towards the corral. Blame it, they all seemed mighty certain I was going out, too. Of course a man was generally expected to go over the hump with his partner, but it didn't make the camp seem so friendly, after hearing this talk. It didn't appear they'd mind my going at all, if I did.

Well, that was the way it was. You had to stick to somebody or something, or the world got to seeming lonesome and cold, and no job was any good. I looked at the fresh morning green of the trees around, and down along the frosty steel rails and ties which ran between the tents and the cookhouse. The sky was a pale gray now and the air was still chilly, but there was a brightness coming over the green of the hills in the East. And suddenly I saw Gager and me on a flatcar, rolling down towards the morning sun, headed for a far place and a wild life, and him orating away. It was either that or else he'd be rolling away alone, and I'd be back

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here on the same old round, fighting Barker and Hick down the twists and turns of a swamped road, dodging the wheels. Working here alone; and winter would come, and then what?

Poor old Gager. I remembered now how he had sighed around in the tent door the night before. He evidently felt very bad about having to go on alone. He seemed to think it was just because I had settled into the way of a plain laborer and wasn't like Paddy the Devil at all any more that I wouldn't go along. Of course that wasn't so, and he ought to have known it. It took a man with muscle to have handled that Barker horse like I did. And a man with some fighting spirit, too. And hadn't I knocked that Dutch limber on his ear just night before last for getting too rough in his talk to Gager? But Gager was really very fine; he meant right, and it was likely just as he said, that books had tormented him with ideas until he couldn't be reasonable. Poor old Gager; it simply wasn't right for me to desert him in this way, and I'd never forgive myself if I did.

The bull of the woods was heaving a pan of water out of the commissary door as I came along.

"Good mornin', Little Bull," I said. "Have the ink-slinger write me out a walk. I'm goin' over the hump."

His shaggy yellow eyebrows and mustache drew together in a scowl. Beads of water were shining on his pink head.

"Holy old sufferin' saints! Top-loader rambles without a warnin'; and now hear this big-necked wheel-twister squawk! No warnin' at all!"

"I throwed the clothes on 'em. Put a rubberman after my wheel, if you ain't got a swamper for the job. So long, old-timer."

"Roll along then. Come back when yer busted. Yer always jake with the Little Bull."

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Taking bulls of the woods as they run, he wasn't so bad.

"Good mornin', my son," said Gager. "Have you been out early to your altars, you plain pagan, you?"

He had shaved, and now he was rubbing his face with a towel until it bloomed red. Right then I didn't understand what he said.

"Yes, I've been down to my halters, Gager. And Barker busted the rope of his'n when I went to collar him, but I tamed him down. I guess I could handle most of the horses and men that I've met up with yet, Gager. And I'm willin' to tackle any I meet, in work, or in this adventure you talk about, either."

"Roman of the stables—wherefore art thou, rough Roman?" said Gager, after staring at me over the towel, which he was holding up with his two hands. "Who speaks now?"

"Concern it, Gager, try to be sensible for a minute. I've just told the Little Bull to mix me up a walk, for I'm goin' with you over the hump. That's all there is to it."

"Ah, Jim, wait for the bright light of day. Wait till you've shaken off my eloquence of the night."

"It wasn't that," I said. "Your liberry talk didn't affect me a particle."

"No. The voice of misery under the moon. Who wants to hear it? The bright morning after is the only time. I'm in a better humor now, Appanoose Jim."

"I thought you was. I'm glad to hear you talkin' natural again, Gager."

"I smell the musty odors of a cool, dark bar. I see the glitter of a brown bottle, I hear the tinkle and gurgle as the neck strikes the rim of a glass and the liquor flows. The tramp of calked boots over a pine floor. Husky bodies in blue jumpers and red and green mackinaws against the bar. The juice of the barley in a

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thick glass, with a trickle of bubbles flowing down from the cap of white foam. Jokes are shouted, laughter is roared, a banjo twangs, and there is song."

"Now you're talkin', Gager old-timer! That's the old fight!"

"Ah, boy!" Gager laughed in his rich, hearty chuckle and sat down on his bed. "I know how to hit you, eh? The eloquence of the day is best. Come then, tempter. Step high, drink deep; oh, sing and laugh! And you with a ready fist, Appanoose Jim!"

"You said it, Gager. I aim to look after you. That's what I mean."

The gong for breakfast rang then.

"We shall eat and depart together. Do we shake hands on that?"

"We do," I said.

And in another hour we were rolling along on the supply car at the tail end of a train of logs. I was feeling mighty fine. I was going along to take care of Gager, and I couldn't help but feel good about it. We were quiet most of the time as we rode along. The heavy cars of logs made a loud roar over the rails. Gager dangled his feet over the side of the car and gazed thoughtfully at the quiet peak of Lassen. I lay with my head on my suitcase and thought about the good blow-in we were likely to have. We had five hundred dollars between us. That should see us through some fine times and a long ways. I wondered if Gager really would go on into that war. He hadn't mentioned it again this morning. Well, if he did, I'd adventure along, too, though there certainly wasn't any sense to it. But Gager needed protection, and the camp would have seemed mighty dull if I'd stayed there alone.

It was not until then that I thought again of the sawmill and the head sawyer's job. That dream—now I wondered what on earth *it* meant, anyway. I tried to

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remember if dreams went by opposites, so that I could tell whether this one was a warning or a good omen. But it was no use; I'd forgotten how to interpret dreams, though my uncle had always been doing it. Gager'd told about a dream once, hadn't he? He might—but then he'd just made a story about that one, and likely he would this one, too. Blame it, there was no use talking, a young fellow like me *had* ought to settle down to a job. And here I was, going off on a wild-goose chase, just on Gager's account. I was a fool to be so soft-hearted. Well, I'd show him that my muscle and spirit were as good as anybody's he'd ever known. I yawned and stretched. Riding that way always makes me sleepy. I dozed off and on, all the rest of the way into town, while Gager sat and watched the green timber and the black slashings drift by.

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XXVII

I WAS disappointed when we went into the bar. It wasn't like I had been imagining it. There were men around in blue overalls and jumpers and red and green mackinaws, all right, but they didn't seem to be enjoying themselves; they were arguing very seriously about the war. Gager bought a round for the house, and the argument stopped for a minute, then it went on full force again, with some of the loggers taking the side of Germany, and others taking the side of England and France, just as it had been out in camp. It made me sick to hear them run on so.

"This looks like we were goin' to have a lot of fun, don't it?" I said to Gager.

"Sounds well enough to me," said Gager. "I hear in their disputes the talk and arguments about the old-time big jobs. The savages are awake again."

"The jabber of slaves," said a voice at Gager's elbow. I looked around Gager and saw a thin-faced, sandy-complected young fellow in a blue serge suit and a white team-hand hat. He appeared to be none too healthy and his gray eyes had a feverish look. They widened now as he and Gager stared at each other.

"Gager! My Mandan comrade, how are you?'

"Hard Line Slim!"

"Hard Line no more, Gager. That stuff is past. I'm Bill Prewter; I agitate and I organize; for I'm red all over. Are you signed up?"

"No," said Gager. "Meet Appanoose Jim—Jim Turner, if that's what you like."

I shook hands, though I didn't take to this party.

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"No, thanks, I don't drink," said Bill Prewter, when I asked him to have a shot. "The saloon is a link in the chain that binds down the slaves, we've come to see. We agitate against it."

"Ah, Prewter," sighed Gager. "You have learned words. Didn't I warn you long ago against the libraries?"

"You did wrong. For there I found the truth that will some day make the whole world free."

"Poor Prewter. You are lean. There is fever in your eyes. Come, tormented man, and go back into the old tribe for a day. Let the three of us drink and be merry together. For old time's sake. In memory of Paddy the Devil, a man you admired. Lift a glass!"

"No, Gager. I have work to do. I'm going to speak some plain truths to these poor slaves right here. Listen, and you may learn."

He walked around and butted into the arguing group without an excuse me or even a howdy do. And then it was talk again. Talk! Talk! Talk! Prewter talked about the war and said his talk was some kind or other proletarian philosophy.

"Come on, Gager," I said. "Let's take a walk until that guy gets out of here. I know that stuff from A to Z. I'm sick of hearin' it."

"Linger awhile," said Gager, moving towards the gang. "He has the gift; his tongue drips a rich poison of words. Listen!"

"Listen all you want to," I said. "I'm goin' out. I'll be back after bit."

And I banged out through the swinging doors. I was disgusted and discouraged. The saloon hadn't brightened things up for me at all. And it wasn't just the arguments that had made things seem all wrong, either. For some reason the loggers in there had looked just like loggers anywhere, the bar had seemed just like a counter

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to cool your thirst over, and the talk around had just made it worse. Something had gone haywire inside of me. I didn't know what it was, but I knew I felt like I'd bump that Prewter in the jaw if I met him again. And as for Gager, well, I was certainly going to set my foot down on him. If we went away to war together—blamed if that notion didn't seem to have less sense every time I thought of it. Concern it, I felt more like a rooster with his head chopped off than I ever had in my life.

But it was a relief somehow to be outside again, breathing the keen autumn air of the mountains, feeling the warmth of the sunlight on my face and neck, seeing the white steam and gray smoke curl up against the blue sky from the exhausts and stacks of the big red mill over yonder. I was swinging along, heading right for the mill, without hardly thinking about it. The yards stretched away to my left, after I had passed the boarding house and the offices, and to my right the water of the big pond shone in spots among the yellow logs. Trucks of lumber were trundling down the narrow tracks that ran between the rows of tall, slanting piles of drying boards. I could see a man every so often on one of the piles, pulling up maybe three 1 by 12's at once over his leather apron and dropping them evenly on the strips. And men down by piles, swinging boards from standing trucks, throwing them over jacks, and tilting them up to the aproned men above. Others on dry piles were shooting boards down to be loaded for the planers, which were yowling away as they shaved boards to a smoothness in a long red shed. The pond men down to my right were all busy, pike-poling logs from the booms to the steel slips that sloped up to the headrigs. Out on the sorting tables men were trotting back and forth, looking at the graders' marks on the boards, and sliding each one out on its proper truck. Two wood wagons

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rumbled down a tramway. Big cars of lumber that had been stacked on edge were being shoved into a dry kiln; the stackermen here at the end of the sorting table had a pile-up behind them and were sweating like fury to catch up; and over beyond the unstacker the dry chain was white with wide boards drifting down to the big planers that dressed the shop lumber.

I got that feeling of excitement again that had come to me on the day after the Fourth.

"Here's work to hold a man!" I said to myself. "By Godfrey, I bet none of these fellows has been tormentin' themselves like I have. They're workin', and doin' work they like. They couldn't help but like it."

I was actually sure of that right then, even though I could see that black foreigners were doing the roughest work around the yards. I went on under the mill, among the pulleys and belts that whirled and creaked and hummed as they worked the roaring machines above. There were a couple of millwrights, working over a bench. Here was an oiler, creeping along a plankway between two big shafts. He was black and greasy, but he looked contented, too. I could bet *he* wasn't worrying about anything much besides his job.

Up the stairs I went then; and here I was on the log deck, watching the star sawyer again. I'd been afraid this second look would disappoint me; but it hadn't. No, sir, it had certainly not. The big band saw sang even a sweeter tune to me than it had before, the sawyer looked even more like a hero; and blamed if I didn't feel somehow just like I was home and couldn't go in, but just had to stand outside and watch a Christmas tree or something like that going on behind the bright windows. And what was holding me out? If it wasn't for Gager——

"What in Sam Hill's the matter now?"

It was the old mill boss yelling this as he jumped

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down the log deck, passed me and hopped on the carriage. It had come to a stop. The dogger was leaning over on the log. I hopped over, too, wanting to know the trouble. And here came the sawyer.

"How'd you expect me to hold up my cut if you give me a green dogger who gets seasick?" he yelled, lifting his voice above the roar of the mill. "How'll I get by that way? I don't mind breakin' in a green man, but one as gets seasick is no use. This'n'll never learn to ride carriage. Look at 'im!"

The setter was helping the seasick dogger down from the carriage, and he certainly looked green around the gills, all in, down and out.

"I gotta send him back to the trimmer, that's plain," said the mill boss. "Dammit, I'm short-handed, too. I'll send you that guy from the slasher."

"That guy I tried yesterday? Holy old pockets and knots! How'd you 'spect me to hold up my cut?"

"What'n Sam Hill can I do then?" yelled the mill boss.

"Try me!"

The two whirled around. And they stared at me, for it was me who said it.

"Gawd! you're a burly, anyways," said the sawyer. "Ever dog?"

"No. But I don't get sick at the belly, old-timer."

"Where's your work clothes?" asked the mill boss.

"At the depot."

"Hell—'ll you put on a pair of overalls over your dress-up rig?"

"You bet. If you got a pair big enough."

"I have. There's a night edgerman whose Levi Strausses'll fit you a plenty."

And the old boss jumped down and strode for the lockers.

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"Come here," said the sawyer.

He led me over to the dogger's lever and showed me how to work it.

"Simple enough. Hang hard when she rolls, or you'll dive. If you get sick——"

"Never mind that, old-timer. I won't dive, and I won't get sick, neither."

"All right. Looky here now. See my fingers. Watch 'em. This is for a turn. This signal's for a new log. You'll get on to the rest. You just keep your eyes open. That's all."

"Now then," said the mill boss, coming up with the overalls and jumper. "Get into these. What's your name?" he said, as I pulled the big blue clothes on over my suit.

"Jim Turner."

He wrote it in his time book.

"Wages, two-fifty," he said. "Report to the time-keeper at noon and get a brass check with your number on it. Now then; let's saw logs."

I just had time to sort of glow up inside and think: "By Godfrey, I'm on a carriage; I'm starting right now to be a sawyer. Already. What do you think of that?" when I had to grip my lever to keep from pitching over into the set works. A fierce scream sounded from in front of me. The band saw, with water dripping down its side, passed swiftly before my eyes. A cant dropped over on the rolls, and at the same time I felt like I was suddenly rising from the carriage floor and starting to fly. "Hold hard, Turner! Hang onto yourself!" I thought, and gritted my teeth. And gripped my lever with my right hand, and the body of the hook that curved over in front of me with the other. And I looked straight into the sawyer's eyes as we streaked it on back. He grinned. He could feel satis-

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fied now that this burly wasn't going to lose his head—or his stomach, either!

H-r-r-r-oom! The carriage wheels roared under me. G-r-r-r-ing! Z-a-a-a-n-n-n-n! The band saw bit into the log and sang on through. Drump! The cant hit the rolls and the tail sawyer straightened it with a jerk of his picaroon as it rumbled away. I was rising to fly again. But again I held fast. And again I snapped a straight stare at the head sawyer. Up from the floor again, as the carriage ground down to a stop and boomed back towards the saw before you could have snapped your finger. I had it now. I swayed to the left as the cant fell away, and I flew no more. Easy stuff. Hup! There's my signal. Up with my hook, while the setter reaches over from his seat and lifts his hook by raising a long handle that is flatways at his hand. The heaving stop; I have forgotten to sway; and I nearly dive into the set works again. As I balance back I see the log bounce up like it was springing straight for me. I step back. I can't help it. G-r-r-r-oom! G-r-r-r-oom! The nigger growls as it shakes the log. Bam! The carriage shakes under my feet as the log hits the blocks. All this just while I am swinging back to my balance. "Got to get 'er!" The thought is like a crackle of fire in my head. Down I come on my lever, full force, and the dog sinks into the log a second before the bark meets the teeth of the band.

That was the way she went. I certainly had to step. This log off, a mess of little ones came down the deck. Then it was a turn of the nigger nearly every roll, and up and down for me with the lever nearly every time, too; and a hanging on, hanging on, for there was no time to watch and catch the sudden stop and plunge ahead with a sway. And my instinct wasn't trained to it yet. Little log after little log. "Damn 'em! Damn 'em, anyhow!" I thought excitedly, as, all bent over, I

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yanked and pushed the lever, and strained against the jerks of the carriage. At last a five-foot butt rolled down against the blocks.

I could straighten up now. I felt wet strings of hair on my forehead. I was hot and sticky under my arms, in the small of my back, and around my belly. My legs and arms ached from the strain. But, by golly, I stared over the big butt with a grin. And the head sawyer grinned back and winked as he grinned. And the setter had a friendly smile for me, too. Ho! this was the stuff. Damn 'er, I'd hold 'er down! All the time. What—well, if it wasn't the mill boss motioning to me from the fountain! And down I leaped, in the quarter second that the carriage was stopped for the dropping of the cant. It was six steps to the fountain, but I loped it in three. I took the water down in gulps. The mill boss was grinning in the friendliest way as I raised my head. A good old place. A fine boss. The sawyer was jake. Lord, what I'd been missing all this time! A leap, and I was up on the carriage again.

Now there was a cool breeze from my right as the carriage rolled back from the band; and then there was a cool breeze from my left as the carriage rolled ahead. I had the chance now to stand and learn the sway for the stops. I could look around; seeing the cants disappear between the big rolls of the edgers, the edged boards coming out from the whirling circular ripsaws and rolling on to the trimmer, the picaroonists pulling the edgings of bark down on the chains that ran to the slasher. The spotters spaced the boards on the chains that crawled over the trimsaw, and the trimmerman in his cage looked down and graded each board and pulled the lever that would raise the right one of the dozen saws. Zing! Zing! Zing! I could hear the song of the trimmers above the roar of the carriage. On across the mill the other five carriages raced back and forth. The setter

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reached out with his plug. I bit off a hearty chew. Time for a turn. I never budged as the big log rolled. I spit hard as I bore down on my lever. Sailing on again. The mill was full of roars and tunes. There were squares of sunlight from the big windows on the men and machines that crowded the vast mill floor. The shine of the pond below the wide slip doors. The green timber beyond. And then the snowy mountains.

Hold hard, bully! Grip this old lever with a tight hand! Sway with the carriage, now! And sway again! Keep your eye on the sawyer's hand! Sweat and strain and spit brown juice around your feet! Oh, boy, you've got your job! With a sawyer's place to work for! Home, boy, home! God damn! You're home at last!

Well, that was the excitement of the hour and a half I worked before noon. It seemed no time at all until the whistle blew. And then I was out of the night edgerman's overalls and tramping along in the stream of mill hands that was headed for the boarding house. I stopped in the office and got a round brass check, with a slot for a strap in it above the number 841. I would need it to get a room in the boarding house and a place at the table.

It was fifteen minutes yet before the dinner gong would ring, so I rambled over to the saloon to say good-bye to Gager. It would just be good-bye and that was all. I wouldn't have thought of going on to the war with him now, any more than I'd have thought of trying to fly to the moon. I was done with all kid stuff, all foolishness, absolutely through. Yet, I didn't know how to break the news to him. I couldn't think of anything to say as I walked up to the gang that was still arguing, talking and talking away, in a corner of the bar.

Prewter seemed to be just finishing a speech. He waved his hand fiercely and the talk shut down.

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"Say what you will, it's the crime of life. You'll all be slaves until you realize it!" His voice was hoarse, but it was full of fire. "What are all the great works of civilization in Europe we hear about but the creations of the sweat and tears and blood of toiling, exploited slaves? And now the crime of life rises in gory triumph again, I say. Just when the slaves get a class-consciousness that makes them cry in a terrible voice for justice, the bloody military adventurers and the political thieves begin to fear and tremble for their spoils; and again they unloose on the poor, simple, plain laborers the old rotten magic of patriotism and religion! That magic is the crime of life! It smears all the pages of history. Deluded, debauched by it, plain laborers go forth at the heels of one gang of military adventurers and slaughter the plain laborers at the heels of another gang, no better, no different. And the works of bitter years of toil are laid waste. And homes are left desolate. And the hearts in the homes are left desolate, too. And for nothing more than the glory of bloody adventurers and the profit of political thieves!"

"Rich poison," said Gager. "Rich and sweet."

"He makes adventure sound nice, don't he?" I said. "Come over here, Gager. I got something to tell you."

He looked me over curiously as we walked away from the gang.

"You show stains that are from toil or battle, Appanoose Jim. What's up?"

"This."

And I flashed my brass check on him.

"A number. A number of brass. You are a number in the mill, Jim Turner."

"A dogger, Gager. I'm goin' for that head sawyer's job, and that's all there is to it."

"I expected this. The last spark glimmers and fades. Well, never mind. I'll say good luck, and no more."

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"Good luck to you, Gager."

We stood and looked at each other. I felt sort of embarrassed and had nothing to say, and I didn't know just what to do, either. Gager had stepped back a little ways from me, and he had a sadness in his gaze that made me feel bad for a minute. Then he folded his arms, his chin came up, and his black eyes got restless and shiny again. He certainly appeared fine and handsome, even if he was a little heavy again; his forehead white now under his black hair and the hat that was raked back over his left ear; his shoulders square in the blue coat; his thin mouth curving into a smile. Suddenly he stepped up and slapped me on the shoulder.

"Go to it, boy," he laughed. "You're right enough. I'm the fool. Never mind. Just think about Gager once in a while and be glad you're not in his shoes; in the war shoes of Gager, off adventuring alone."

"You're sure goin', then, Gager."

"Aye, lad. It's my fate. Words have been my sin and my ruin. I even haven't a hope in my soul, like Prewter yonder."

"Hear him rave," I said. "I'd like to bat him one."

"No use, Turner. He's the new evangelist, the heir of Prometheus and Paul. You won't understand that; but I tell you I know. Keep your mind from his words and the words of others, in talk and in books. Stick to your job with heart and soul and reap contentment."

"Thanks for your good advice, Gager. I'll sure do nothin' else. Well, so long, old-timer."

"One last glass together, eh."

I nodded and we went to the bar. Gager ordered wine.

"To whose memory?" he asked, as he lifted the glass.

I caught on, and it made me feel good when I did.

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"To Paddy——"

"Ah, lad—the great dark devil! Around such heroes we all can meet. Drink!"

And we did.

"You'll write me a line, won't you, Gager?"

"No. What I write I burn. Forget me. Romance and rhetoric, the material and the tool of the orator and the bard. The machine has choked them down. I, a lyricist, am out of my time. I, an orator, am done. I go forth to adventure—and surrender."

"You buck up, Gager, old-timer. You'll be all right."

"Cheer, youth! There is yet the wine of the sun. Shake—and good-bye."

As his hand slipped from mine, Gager turned his back to me and leaned on the bar. I walked slowly past the gang of arguers. A big Swede logger was smacking his left palm with his right fist and bawling in Prewter's face. He started another speech and I jumped for the door. I looked back once as I passed out. Gager was turning the empty wineglass between his fingers and staring into it. He was alone.

The sunlight was over me and around my hurrying feet. The cool breeze blew over my tired shoulders. There was the good old big red mill. And the green hills, the white mountains and the blue sky. Oh, but this was fine! I felt so free.

I was sitting on a log with the little Italian girl. We were on the hillside back of her home. Her head was on my shoulder and my free hand was playing with the ring I had got from her finger, after a good little rough-house. She was quiet now, quiet and soft in my arm. She was wearing a long coat, with fur around the collar. I was wearing my dress-up clothes. A hearty supper, a

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hot bath and a shave had made me feel fine. And here I was, sitting with the little Italian girl on a big pine log.

I whistled a couple of notes and looked up at the sky. It was black, but speckled very brightly with stars. I couldn't make out the white mountains, with the peak of Lassen among them, now. The timber, the slashings and the uncut forests were a deep black shadow beyond the mill. But the mill was bright and alive. It was ringed around and striped with lights. Rows of lights out along the booms of logs in the pond. Strings of lights in the yards. A white glare along the planer sheds. And the windows along the roof of the mill-house, which let in the sunlight by day, were glowing squares of white now.

A breeze blew up the hill. It carried the sounds of the planers and saws. Already I could pick out the tunes of the edgers, the trimmers and the bands. Kup-a-chug! Kup-a-chug! This was the growling of the exhausts from the cylinders which held the power for the log carriages. At each growl a puff of white steam rolled up, raveled out and faded away in the smoky red glare from the domes of the great steel burners which loomed over the mill.

I sat on the big pine log with the little Italian girl and looked down the slope and listened to the sounds that sang up to me and felt about as good as I had ever felt in all my born days.

Now and then I got a glimpse of my carriage—*my* carriage, you bet!—flashing before a window. That night dogger might be an old-timer, but I knew I could beat him before long. My sawyer had told me so that very day. I hadn't said anything out loud, but something inside of me had said: "Yes, and in a few years I'll beat you a-sawin'." I just knew it.

For a little bit I thought of Gager, and rather sadly, too. Well, it was tough, but what he was was his own

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fault. I couldn't do anything but feel sorry for him. All that was in my past life. I must shove it away. And I mustn't let myself be bothered by his plain pagan rot and his idea about laborers with numbers, living in barns. There was only one way to do, and that was to laugh at such ideas, and at the ideas of preachers like that Prewter, too. I didn't want to be a tormented man. No, sir. It wasn't in me any more to be, and that was all there was to it. Well— Poor old Gager. He'd treated me pretty white when I was a fool kid. And couldn't he tell stories and sing, though!

"That's all shove' behind me, long ago and far away—"

I could still hear him singing it, in the saddest, tenderest way. Poor old tormented Gager. I certainly was glad I'd decided to be like Beaut, as I felt the little Italian girl snuggle closer. What a fool I'd be to waste time over book ideas, when I could sit out here on a log with a cute little trick like her! I had to laugh.

"What's ticklin' you, big boy?" whispered the little Italian girl.

"I'm just laughin' at liberry talk," I said.

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